THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL STATED AND DEFENDED.

A

SERMON.

THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL STATED AND DEFENDED.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND
FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

Thurſday, May 29. 1794.

BY JOHN SNODGRASS, D. D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF PAISLEY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY,
AND OF THEIR EXPENDITURE, FROM
DEC. I. 1794.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY JOHN PATERSON.

M DCC XCIV.

EDINBURGH, 29th *May*, 1794.

At a General Meeting of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Chriſtian Knowledge,

The Earl of Leven, Preſident, in the Chair,

THE thanks of the Society were given from the Chair to the Rev. Dr. Snodgraſs, for his excellent Sermon this day preached before them; and he was requeſted to give his manuſcript of the ſame, to be printed for the benefit of the Society.

Jo. KEMP, Sec.

BIBL CANT ACAD

72...4714

THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL STATED AND DEFENDED.

A

SERMON.

ROM. i. 16.

I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt: for it is the power of God unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth.

WHEN mankind at large were about to be favoured with a revelation from Heaven, in which their everlaſting intereſts were moſt deeply concerned; nothing could appear, at firſt ſight, more natural than to ſuppoſe, that the truths which it contained ſhould be level to every capacity;—that they

BIBL CANT ACAD

ſhould be entirely accommodated to human modes of conception;—that every thing offenſive to human prejudices ſhould be ſoftened, if not concealed;—and that both its doctrines and its laws ſhould be repreſented in the moſt inviting form, ſo as to recommend them at once to the underſtanding and to the heart. It could not, ſurely, have been imagined, that this revelation would contain any thing myſterious or incomprehenſible. Far leſs could it be ſuppoſed, that it ſhould wear ſuch an unfavourable aſpect in the eye of the world, as to make it either neceſſary or proper, for any of thoſe by whom it was publiſhed, to aſſert, that "he "was not aſhamed of it."

The fact, however, is directly contrary to what we ſhould have expected. The Goſpel undoubtedly contains doctrines which are myſterious and incomprehenſible in their very nature. Even that leading article, on the belief of which the ſalvation of men is ſuſpended, *that Jeſus is the Son of God*, poſſeſſes this character in a high degree. But the very idea of a crucified Saviour, is ſo re-

pugnant to the natural ſentiments of the human mind, and ſo apparently incredible in the judgement of this world, that perhaps nothing, that could be propoſed, was more fitted to excite general averſion and contempt. "Phyſi-"cian heal thyſelf," was a proverb well underſtood and eaſy to be applied. And the inſulting language of his enemies at his crucifixion, "He ſaved others; himſelf he cannot ſave," proceeds upon the ſame original judgement.

The treatment which this doctrine met with perfectly accords with what has now been aſerted. For, notwithſtanding the reſurrection of the Lord, and all the wonderful events with which it was followed; yet the offence of the croſs was not removed. It ſtill continued, "to "the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the "Greeks fooliſhneſs." The preaching of this doctrine was ſtiled "the fooliſhneſs of preach-"ing;" and thoſe who eſpouſed it were "eve-"ry where ſpoken againſt."

But theſe circumſtances, however diſcouraging, ſeem only to have ſtimulated this great apoſtle in the diſcharge of his arduous office. He had already preached the goſpel through a wide extent

extent of country; from Jeruſalem round about unto Illyricum. He had often purpoſed to viſit Rome, that he might impart to the Chriſtians there ſome extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; no apoſtle it appears having as yet been among them. Hitherto, however, he had been prevented from executing his deſign. But this was owing to certain neceſſary cauſes, and not to any careleſsneſs on his part; far leſs, to his being unwilling to hazard his reputation, in preaching the deſpiſed doctrines of the Goſpel, even in that celebrated ſeat of learning and politeneſs. For he tells them with a bold and manly ſpirit, "I am debtor both to the Greeks "and to the barbarians, both to the wiſe and "to the unwiſe; ſo as much as in me is I am "ready to preach the goſpel to you that are "at Rome alſo. For I am not aſhamed of "the goſpel of Chriſt; for it is the power of "God unto ſalvation, to every one that be-"lieveth."

It is ſcarcely to be doubted, that many who are called Chriſtians think very differently from the apoſtle upon this point. They cannot conceive, that the doctrines which Chriſtianity has been

been generally ſuppoſed to teach, can ever be reconciled to any principles of reaſon or probability. This, however, is nothing new or unexampled. The truth is, that the goſpel has had inveterate prejudices to combat, both from the underſtanding and from the paſſions of men; and, therefore, it is no great wonder that it ſhould have met with much oppoſition in the world; as in fact has been the caſe, in every age, and in every country, where it has been preached.

It muſt, therefore, be of importance, to vindicate the ſcheme of religion and ſalvation to men, which it diſcloſes, in oppoſition to theſe prejudices; and particularly, if it can be done, to ſhew that it contains nothing, which, even in the eye of ſober reaſon itſelf, there is any cauſe to be aſhamed of.

This I ſhall attempt, at leaſt with reſpect to ſeveral of its eſſential and diſtinguiſhing doctrines, in the following diſcourſe. After which, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that the effect which it produces, upon all who cordially receive it, is ſo divinely great and excellent, that, inſtead

of

of being aſhamed of it, there is the higheſt reaſon to glory in it.

Firſt of all, however, it will be neceſſary to enquire, what are the eſſential and leading doctrines which the goſpel contains. For theſe, it is evident, we muſt have recourſe to the ſacred record alone. But let it be obſerved, that this ineſtimable record was not left as a depoſit to which only the learned and the ſpeculative could have acceſs. It was intended equally for the uſe and benefit of the poor, " that their " faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of man ;" and conſequently, it muſt be accommodated, in all its eſſential articles, to their ſituation and capacities.

This, therefore, I lay down as a principle, which, one ſhould think, could ſcarcely be diſputed. Upon the contrary ſuppoſition, how deplorable the ſituation to which the great bulk of mankind muſt be reduced? The right of private judgement, that ineſtimable privilege, which every reaſonable creature ſo juſtly claims, can be of little benefit to them, if they muſt depend upon the determinations of men of ſuperior

perior endowments even for the knowledge of " the words of eternal life." If they cannot clearly diſcern, from the face of the revelation itſelf, what are the leading characters of that ſcheme of doctrine which it unfolds, how ſhall they be able to decide upon the various opinions which may be formed reſpecting it? How eaſy is it for the ſophiſtry of human reaſonings, eſpecially when embelliſhed with the faſcinating charms of eloquence, to throw an air of plauſibility upon the moſt viſionary ſchemes; the fallacy of which it will be impoſſible for them to detect? If then a principle of this kind ſhould be maintained, it would, as effectually, be *locking up the father's will in a ſtrong box*, as what was done by the policy of the Roman pontiff himſelf. For, if the people cannot exerciſe their judgement, even upon the great eſſential doctrines of ſalvation, but through the medium of learned and ingenious diſquiſition, it is of little conſequence, whether they be under the influence of the fancy of philoſophy, or the cunning of prieſtcraft. The queſtion, therefore, is not, In what manner this ſacred record may be interpreted by men of extraordi-

nary

nary ability and learning? But, What is the eaſy and natural meaning in which it would be underſtood by a plain ſimple inquirer, who ſhould give himſelf up implicitly to the inſtructions which it contains? *

In order to place this matter in a juſt and proper light, I will take the liberty to introduce a ſhort memoir of a humble ſearcher after truth, in one of thoſe diſtant parts of the world, where the beams of the ſun of righteouſneſs have never ſhone, but where ſome original ideas derived from early tradition are ſtill to be found. Long had he felt the deficiency of nature's

* I hope none will ſo far miſunderſtand me as to ſuppoſe, that I am pleading againſt the neceſſity of talents and learning to the ſtudy of the Scripture. On the contrary, I am convinced, that, perhaps, no ſtudy requires a greater variety of accompliſhments. Of this, there cannot be a ſtronger proof, than that, notwithſtanding the labours of ages, in which men of the beſt qualifications, both natural and acquired, have been engaged, many obſcurities and difficulties in the ſacred volume are ſtill unremoved; many paſſages ſeem not to have received a juſt or adequate interpretation, and many more continue evidently deſpoiled of their native elegance and beauty. I only contend, that all the eſſential doctrines of Scripture are delivered in ſo plain a manner, that he that runs may read them.

ture's light. Much had he wiſhed to be more perfectly inſtructed. At length, by the diſpoſitions of providence, he became acquainted with this precious record. He underſtood that it contained a revelation from the Father of the univerſe. He learned that it diſcovered a wonderful plan for regenerating the human character; for delivering men from their diſtreſſes,—and making them happy for ever. Therefore, with the moſt ſincere and honeſt anxiety, he applies to ſtudy it.—Let us follow him a little in his important reſearch.

What is the firſt diſcovery in the order of this plan that opens to his view? It is a melancholy one indeed: But he cannot reſiſt its evidence, unleſs he will ſhut his eyes from beholding it. It is this: That man is degraded and ruined by ſin;—that the vengeance of Heaven is hanging over his head;—and that without a ſovereign remedy, beyond the power of creation to produce, he muſt inevitably periſh. He feels his ſituation; conſcience bears teſtimony to the truth; his anxieties are encreaſed; and his enquiries quickened.

He next perceives a truth which at once a-

ſtoniſhes and gladdens his heart:—That there is an Almighty Deliverer provided for man, who is diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of the Son of God; that he poſſeſſes divine perfection and glory, and is the object of divine homage; that this wonderful perſon became a man; that he was born; that he lived in this world; that he laboured; and that he ſuffered; and that he died: That by his death he made atonement for our guilt; that by the infinite value of his ſacrifice and of his ſervice he obtained a glorious happineſs for all his ſaints; and that he is now gone into the heavens to prepare it for them.

In the progreſs of his reſearches, he becomes acquainted with another divine perſon, who is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Chriſt. By his almighty energy, he learns, that the ſouls of men are quickened; that their underſtandings are illuminated; that their affections are purified, and elevated to heavenly objects; and that they are at length made fit inhabitants of that happy world. Finally, he learns, that God diſpenſes theſe ineſtimable benefits according to his ſovereign good pleaſure,

and

and claims the right *of doing what he will with his own.* He comes away aſtoniſhed at the doctrines he had been taught; but without a ſingle doubt upon his mind that theſe doctrines were certainly declared in this book of God.

Do you aſk to whom this hiſtory particularly refers? I anſwer, It is the hiſtory of every man, who comes to the New Teſtament with an earneſt deſire to know and to receive the truth which it reveals. Indeed how can it be otherwiſe? The doctrines we have been reciting are there written in the cleareſt and moſt determinate expreſſions; ſo that the common meaning of language muſt be entirely altered before it is poſſible to get quit of them.

Notwithſtanding this, I know it has been a frequent practice of late, to endeavour to bring down Chriſtianity almoſt to the ſame level with what is called natural religion, (a thing that has never yet been defined) by denying that there are any ſuch doctrines contained in it. In this way, it is imagined, the prejudices of unbelievers may be beſt removed, and its credit effectually eſtabliſhed in the world. But the event which has happened here is ſuch as might

reaſonably

reaſonably have been expected. For the nearer Chriſtianity is brought to natural religion, its importance will be the more diminiſhed; till at length there will appear to be little occaſion or need for it at all. But when one conſiders what violence muſt be done to the ſacred writings before theſe doctrines can be expunged from them, is it not fitted to create in the minds of unbelievers, no very favourable ſuſpicion concerning them, when even in the judgement of thoſe who defend them, their plain and obvious meaning muſt be rejected, and they muſt be turned and wreſted in ſo ſtrange a manner, to make them ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs? Nothing is more injurious to Chriſtianity, than this miſtaken zeal to promote its intereſt. It encreaſes inſtead of leſſening the prejudices of unbelievers. And with reſpect to the faithful, it is a moſt uſeleſs labour, as it is an attempt to defend the external revelation at the expence of the doctrines which it contains; on account of which, alone, it is valuable and excellent in their eſteem.

But, indeed, ſcarcely any thing can be more prepoſterous, than to attempt to eradicate theſe doctrines

doctrines from the ſacred volume, which it bears ſo evidently on its very front. It is one of thoſe high abſurdities which nothing but the all-familiariſing power of cuſtom prevents us from perceiving. Was the goſpel really intended for the uſe of the people at large? and can we ſuppoſe it delivered in ſuch a manner, that not one of a thouſand can underſtand its real meaning? But, was it neceſſary that it ſhould ſpeak in a peculiar phraſeology, that the people of that age might be able to underſtand it? and can we ſuppoſe that no adequate proviſion ſhould be made for thoſe of future ages to prevent them from miſapprehending it? Or rather, is it not moſt unreaſonable to imagine, that, for the ſake of a handful of Jewiſh converts, this divine revelation ſhould be ſet forth, with ſuch a conſtant reference to their hiſtory, and opinions, and circumſtances, and ceremonies, that neither the Gentiles of that age, nor of any future age of the world, ſhould be able to underſtand it?

What a ſtrange figure would a profeſſed teacher of Chriſtianity make, were he to carry this ſacred record to one of thoſe diſtant parts of the

the world to which we have been alluding, and endeavour to propagate from it a religion ſo contrary to what it apparently teaches!——In conſiſtency with the teſtimony which it bears of itſelf, he muſt put it into the hands of the people, as intended for their uſe. He muſt deſire them carefully to read, and to ponder it: and he muſt be candid enough to inform them, that it is his ſole authority for the doctrines in which he is come to inſtruct them. It makes little difference which of its great and leading doctrines we ſuppoſe to occupy their attention. We ſhall therefore at preſent conſider him, as inſtructing them in the doctrine of our Lord's perſon and character, upon which the whole ſcheme of our redemption hangs. Let us liſten for a moment to what paſſes between them.

He informs them, that he was a prophet mighty in word and deed, whom God had commiſſioned to direct mankind in the way to happineſs;—that there was ſomething very extraordinary and admirable in his character:—That, notwithſtanding, there is little reaſon to believe that he was more than human; but, at any rate, they muſt beware of conſidering him

him as God, becauſe there can be no God but one.

How then does it happen, ſays one of that untutored people, that he is repreſented as God in this ſacred record? There I find he is not only called God in a variety of places, but he is called *the great God;* and deſcribed as *over all God bleſſed for evermore.*

Why, ſays the enlightened teacher, theſe are to be underſtood only as magnificent titles, expreſſive of his delegated authority and miraculous endowments.

But, replies the other, I find thoſe qualities, by which God is diſtinguiſhed from every creature, aſcribed to him; and I ſee him held forth as the object of worſhip both to angels and men.

But do not you hear him telling you likewiſe, that his Father is greater than he?

Undoubtedly I do. But this can occaſion no great difficulty. For, as he is repreſented both in the character of God and man, he ſpeaks of himſelf ſometimes in the one character and ſometimes in the other. Beſides, he ſuſtains an official character as Mediator; by which this ſeeming difficulty may be aptly reſolved.

But

But ſtill, continues the rational and philoſophical divine, you muſt not interpret the Scripture in any ſenſe which is unreaſonable.

Well, then, replies the aſtoniſhed catechumen, when I read, in this infallible record, that the Saviour is God, and the great God; it ſeems I muſt believe *that he is not God!*—when I ſee the perfections of God aſcribed to him, I muſt believe *that there is no proper deity belonging to him!*—and when I behold him receiving the adoration both of angels and of ſaints, I muſt believe, *that it is idolatry for me to worſhip him!* Tell me now, I beſeech you, which of theſe is the moſt *unreaſonable* interpretation?———

The ſame abſurdity will be found to adhere to every attempt, to explain away any of the leading doctrines which the goſpel contains.

Let us now endeavour to vindicate theſe doctrines from the miſrepreſentations which they have ſuffered: and to ſhew, that, notwithſtanding all that ſeverity of cenſure which has been paſſed upon them, and notwithſtanding all that contempt and deriſion in which they have been frequently

frequently held,—there is nothing in their character which, even in the eye of ſober reaſon itſelf, there is any cauſe to be aſhamed of.

I might here ſafely reſt the whole of their defence upon this general ground,—that it is a dictate of the higheſt reaſon, to receive whatever we know of a truth that God has revealed for our inſtruction and benefit. This is one of thoſe unqueſtionable maxims which can ſcarcely admit either of illuſtration or proof; and yet it carries ſomething along with it ſo mortifying to human pride, that it is the moſt difficult thing in the world to perſuade men to reduce it to practice. Hence it is that we find them going on in direct oppoſition to it every day, and running into the moſt flat and palpable abſurdity. What can be more preſumptuous, than to bring the ſchemes of infinite and unſearchable Wiſdom to the teſt of human ignorance and weakneſs? What can be more prepoſterous and arrogant, than for that very reaſon, which confeſſedly ſtands in need of a divine inſtructor to enlighten it, to ſit as ſovereign judge upon the propriety of the inſtructions which He delivers;

BIBL CANT ACAD

and, in oppoſition to his plaineſt declarations, to pronounce that theſe things cannot be ſo? With infinitely greater decorum could the moſt unenlightened peaſant reprobate the inventions of an Archimedes as impracticable, or the diſcoveries of a Newton as incredible, becauſe he could not underſtand them; and indeed, in ſome inſtances, they ran contrary to the evidence of his very ſenſes.

Let candour then acknowledge, what it is impoſſible to deny, that it is unreaſonable in the extreme to reject the plain and obvious meaning of revelation, either becauſe we cannot comprehend it, or becauſe we are unable to reconcile it with ſome other principles which muſt of neceſſity be held.

But perhaps it may be proper to go more fully into the ſubject than can be done upon any general ground. I begin then with obſerving, what is ſtrong to our purpoſe, that ſeveral of the important doctrines which the goſpel teaches, are of ſuch a nature, that they will be found to remain after all the endeavours that can be uſed to get rid of them. This, if I miſtake not, is the caſe with the doctrine of original

ginal ſin, as it is commonly called; and likewiſe with ſome other doctrines, which I ſhall have occaſion to take notice of. And if this can be clearly proved, we have ſurely no reaſon to be aſhamed of the religion which we profeſs, becauſe it teaches us that the ſtate and nature of things are what they are.

With reſpect to the doctrine of original ſin, perhaps it is not ſufficiently conſidered, that to deny that mankind are in a guilty and ruined ſtate, is to ſubvert the very deſign of the goſpel; as it makes Chriſt to come upon a miſtaken and uſeleſs errand, namely, to ſave a world which was not loſt: and to admit this general guilt and ruin, is in effect to acknowledge the very doctrine which is now in queſtion. Beſides, have we not the cleareſt evidence, from the uniform conduct of Providence every day, that human creatures are treated as guilty, even in their infant ſtate, and before they can have done any thing perſonally to occaſion it, by being ſubjected to death, and all thoſe excruciating agonies by which it is often preceded?——Nothing can be more feeble than the attempt to explain this away, by inſiſting that it is not neceſſarily

ceſſarily connected with guilt or demerit in the ſufferers; as the ſame God who beſtows life has undoubtedly a right to take it away when and in what manner he pleaſes *. For, is it not one of the plaineſt declarations of the word of God, that death is the wages of ſin? Every circumſtance that is mentioned reſpecting it confirms this declaration. By ſin it was introduced into the world. It was threatened beforehand as the puniſhment of ſin: and it has been inflicted, under this idea, in every period from the fall of Adam to the preſent time.

When

* I ought here to have excepted the apology which is made for this part of the divine conduct by a late celebrated advocate for the integrity and innocence of human nature as it comes into the world; becauſe, while it poſſeſſes a ſtill worſe quality, it is the weakeſt that can be imagined. He ſeems to be ſenſible, that it is not conſiſtent with perfect equity that ſufferings and death ſhould be inflicted upon innocent creatures. But he obſerves, "that the Lord of all beings can never want "time and place and power abundantly to compenſate their "ſufferings *:"—Not conſidering, that the very idea of a compenſation being neceſſary proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of injuſtice; and that God can no more be unjuſt for a ſingle moment than he can be unjuſt for ever.

* See Dr. Taylor on original ſin.

When death, therefore, is carrying on its ravages without exception or reſerve, it is not merely as ſuffering, but as penal ſuffering, that we are conſtrained to view it. And that man muſt reaſon in a very ſingular manner, indeed, who ſhould chooſe to maintain, that though God has been inflicting this puniſhment, from age to age, upon vaſt multitudes of the human ſpecies, who have never ſinned in their own perſons; yet this is no ſufficient or ſatisfying evidence that they are treated as guilty in being ſubjected to it.

But what deſerves our particular attention is, that the other part of this doctrine, the corruption of our nature, is itſelf a matter of fact which can ſcarcely be diſputed; and therefore it muſt be accounted for equally upon every ſcheme. Every production of the divine Worker muſt be abſolutely perfect as it comes from his hand. The queſtion, therefore, is ſhortly this:—Whether it be moſt reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that this corruption in which we are involved, and all the miſery which is conſequent upon it, has befallen us on account of a tranſgreſſion which ſome way or other is charged upon

on us; or for no cauſe or reaſon that can be aſſigned at all?

But ſtill, perhaps, it will not be allowed that there is any original or native corruption in the human breaſt. Perhaps it will be ſaid, that the corrupt tendency which appears in every perſon as ſoon as he may be denominated a moral agent, is the effect of the evil example alone under which he was formerly educated. This, however, is only removing one difficulty by introducing another. For it will be found as hard to reconcile it with the equity of the divine government, that human creatures ſhould be placed in circumſtances in which they ſhall all be infallibly perverted by the time that they are capable of diſtinguiſhing between good and evil; as that the different parts of their conſtitution ſhould be unequally balanced, and conſequently, that they ſhould poſſeſs the evil bias when they come into the world.

The Scripture doctrine, therefore, of original ſin, is ſo far from being abſurd or unreaſonable, that it goes a greater length in accounting for appearances than any other principle that has yet been diſcovered. The antient moral-

iſts

iſts acknowledged the fact; but were unable to explain it. Whence cometh evil? was the queſtion to which none of them could give a ſatisfying anſwer. But the Scripture leads us to the true ſolution of this puzzling problem. It informs us, that human nature, which then only exiſted in the perſons of our firſt parents, fell from its integrity, when it was put to the trial in its moſt perfect ſtate:—A trial, not only moſt equitable and fair, but likewiſe ſo apparently eaſy, that no perſon whatever, had he been then preſent, could have heſitated a moment in reſting his future fortunes upon it. This, therefore, ought to be conſidered, not as the trial of one man, or of one pair only, but of the whole ſpecies; all the individuals of which ſeem to be much more the ſame in the divine conſtitution than we at preſent can eaſily conceive of. And accordingly we find, that the taint which human nature received in the original tranſgreſſion has univerſally over-run it; and has become like "the little leaven which leavened the "whole lump."

To go over all the evidence for this doctrine, and to anſwer all the objections, many of them idle

idle enough, which have been brought againſt it, would require a volume. I only meant to take it up under one particular aſpect, in order to impreſs the mind with the inſignificance and folly of endeavouring to prevent Chriſtianity from aſſerting as a principle, what we ſee founded in nature and exiſting in fact.

It were no difficult matter to ſhew, that ſomething of the ſame character belongs even to the myſterious doctrine of the decrees of God. It will readily be ſuppoſed that this doctrine is as far removed from experience as any that was ever the ſubject of human ſpeculation; and yet, ſtrange as it may appear, I doubt not that a penetrating eye will, in ſome of the moſt important inſtances, diſcover the decree lurking in the event which is connected with it. At preſent, I ſhall only ſpend an obſervation or two upon this particular point, before we go on to the other doctrines which remain chiefly to be conſidered.

I am aware, that this is a doctrine ſo very offenſive to the carnal reaſonings of the mind of man, that every poſſible endeavour has been uſed to explain it away. By ſome it is denied

that there are any particular decrees at all: an opinion ſo apparently inconſiſtent with the divine perfection, that it does not merit a ſerious confutation. By others it is maintained, that the decrees are not abſolute, but conditional; and that they proceed upon foreſeen faith and obedience in thoſe who are the objects of the divine favour. It is, however, generally allowed, that God foreſaw from eternity every future event; none profeſſedly denying it, except thoſe who believe ſo very little of Chriſtianity that they ſcarcely deſerve to be reckoned among its votaries. And this foreknowledge, if it be attentively conſidered, will be found, as to all the effects and conſequences of it, to be the very ſame thing with a decree. For no perſon, I ſuppoſe, will have the boldneſs to affirm, that the foreſeen incredulity of a ſinner could not be prevented or overcome even by the power of almighty grace itſelf. And accordingly, ſome of the moſt candid and able defenders of the laſt mentioned opinion, when puſhed to the uttermoſt, and aſked, Why this foreſeen incredulity was not prevented, and the ſinner ſaved from deſtruction? have been obliged ſimply to re-

ſolve it into the ſovereignty of the divine counſels, and to ſay with the Scripture, *becauſe it ſo pleaſed God.*

This every one muſt perceive is giving up the point. But how is it poſſible conſiſtently to maintain it? Will it be laid down as a principle, that it was the ultimate deſign of God, that every individual of the human race ſhould be ſaved? How then can we conceive that his deſign ſhould be fruſtrated? But will it be ſaid, that he carries on this deſign by communicating only ſuch a meaſure of grace as might be ſufficient for the ſalvation of all men? To ſuperficial enquirers this will be a plauſible ſalvo. But did he not foreſee that this meaſure of grace would be effectual in ſome, but not in all? How then can we ſuppoſe him carrying on this great benevolent deſign, upon a plan by which he certainly knew it would never be accompliſhed? We muſt therefore, in all conſiſtency, relinquiſh the principle that has been now laid down. And, unleſs we chooſe to be ſo abſurd as to reject the doctrine altogether, this will oblige us to take up with that abſolute and ſovereign election which the Scripture teach-

es; and of which, what it is impoſſible to doubt of as matter of fact, the final deſtruction of thoſe who are not the objects of it, is a confirming proof.

I am not unacquainted with the difficulties which ariſe upon ſuch a ſubject;—difficulties which will recur upon us, in ſome degree, upon every ſcheme that can be adopted. It is indeed a ſubject upon which it becomes us both to ſpeak and to think with deep humility and ſelf-diffidence, as what is beyond the power of any mortal, and probably of any created being, to comprehend. But if we would regulate our judgements by the dictates of revealed truth, we ſhould find theſe difficulties greatly diminiſhed. The chief of them relates to that impenetrable myſtery, the introduction of ſin under the adminiſtration of an all-perfect Being. But this is a point upon which, I conceive, we are not permitted to ſpeculate. The Scripture never leads our views, upon this ſubject, beyond the apoſtaſy and fall of man. The decree always conſiders man as a guilty and periſhing creature. And, when this fact is once admitted, it will go far to enable us to vindicate the

divine

divine procedure: as it is a righteous thing with God to ſuffer the wicked to go on in their evil courſes; while his mercy is diſplayed in ſnatching whom he pleaſes as brands from the burning, and making them the trophies of his victorious grace *.

Let

* It is curious to obſerve the weakneſs and folly of human invention, when applied to correct or improve the ſchemes of God. This is really the light in which it is often to be viewed; although it is not to be expected that men will acknowledge it; and indeed it ought in candour to be ſuppoſed that they themſelves are not ſenſible of it. They ſet out with an opinion, that what the Scripture appears to declare, in ſeveral inſtances, cannot be true, becauſe it leads to inconſiſtency and contradiction. Therefore they form meaſures of conduct for the divine Being more ſimple and probable, which they ſcruple not to lay down as the ſcheme which he has purſued. This folly is no where more manifeſt than with reſpect to the ſubject which we are now treating. When they have explained away the doctrine which the goſpel teaches, and ſubſtituted their own invention in its room; have they made the matter more clear and conſiſtent than it was before?—have they found out a ſcheme more worthy of God, as they often ſpeak, or more effectual to the purpoſe which he may be ſuppoſed to have had in view? ——Let us examine the fictions which their imaginations have ſuggeſted.

To maintain that there are no particular decrees at all, involves the very unſeemly concluſion, that God has formed a world,

Let us now turn our attention to thoſe very momentous doctrines in which the method of our ſalvation is unfolded; and which therefore require a more particular examination. Were we

world, and has left all the events which ſhould take place in it, at leaſt ſo far as human actions are concerned, uncertain and deſultory, to be determined in any way whatever as chance may direct them. Beſides, in order to give this ſcheme the appearance of conſiſtency, it is found neceſſary to deny that the foreknowledge of God extends to human actions: from which it unavoidably follows, that the great deſign of God in ſaving ſinners from deſtruction, by being ſuſpended upon the caprice of the human will, might be entirely defeated. What can be more diſhonouring to the divine Perfection than this? What more degrading to the infinite wiſdom of God, than to ſuppoſe him laying down a plan, of which, by the very ſuppoſition, it is impoſſible for him to enſure the ſucceſs, and of which indeed he cannot perceive the iſſue? How can it ever be reconciled to the principles of inviolable integrity and truth, that He ſhould deliver a vaſt variety of predictions, of events depending upon the will of man, and make us firmly to expect their accompliſhment, when at beſt they can be no more than probable conjectures; ſuch events, according to them, being abſolutely uncertain till they actually take place?

On the other hand, to maintain the doctrine of particular decrees, not abſolute, but conditional, and proceeding upon foreſeen faith and obedience, or the want of them, leads to evident abſurdity and contradiction. It ſuppoſes God certainly to foreſee the future determinations of the human mind, although

we to take them up in their full extent, it is eaſy to perceive that it would be impoſſible to do any juſtice to them within the bounds of a ſingle diſcourſe. I ſhall, therefore, ſelect the two

though theſe are held to be really contingent and uncertain. It agrees with the former ſcheme in this contingency and uncertainty of human actions, in order to make it conſiſtent with God's deſign of ſaving all men; and yet it determines the character and ſtate of every particular perſon as unalterably as the doctrine of abſolute decrees does. For, as no truth can be more evident, than that what is certainly foreſeen muſt certainly happen; the decree paſſing upon this certain foreknowledge makes the whole matter as fixed and neceſſary as any thing that can be conceived. Every objection, then, that can be brought againſt the doctrine of abſolute decrees, from the inefficacy of all arguments and motives upon the non-elected, may be turned againſt this ſcheme with undiminiſhed force: for thoſe, who are certainly foreſeen to reſiſt all the means that ſhall be uſed for their ſalvation, cannot be prevailed upon or overcome by any. Every meaſure, then, that can be taken to reclaim them, muſt be as fruitleſs upon the one ſcheme as upon the other: while this laſt poſſeſſes the high abſurdity, of repreſenting God as labouring to accompliſh the ſalvation of thoſe very perſons by means which he knew in fact would be inadequate to the deſign.——I ſay nothing at preſent upon a middle ſcheme for ſolving the difficulties upon this myſterious ſubject, though adopted by a Watts, and commended by the deſcriptive powers of a Milton; becauſe, while it does little to obviate the above-mentioned objections, it induces additional ones.

two following as the ſubject of our preſent inquiry; which are of principal importance, and which indeed in ſome meaſure include the reſt.

I. That the atoning ſacrifice, and meritorious obedience of Chriſt, are the only grounds upon which we can obtain pardon of ſin, and acceptance with God unto eternal life.

II. That it is only by the all-powerful energy of the Holy Spirit upon the ſoul, that we can be renewed and ſanctified after the image of God.

I. There is no article of our Chriſtian faith which comes more cloſely home to the deepeſt intereſts and feelings of the human heart, than that of our reconciliation and acceptance with God

ones. I have indeed already obſerved, that it is no ſufficient reaſon for rejecting a doctrine of revelation, that it is attended with inſuperable difficulties in our manner of conceiving it: but it is certainly a poor recommendation of any ſcheme, when, in order to eſcape theſe difficulties, it turns aſide from the ſcripture truth, and falls into greater.

God in virtue of the death and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as it has juſt now been ſtated. What intimation can be more animating and joyful than "that through this man is preached to us "the forgiveneſs of ſins *." What hiſtory can be more affecting than the ſimple narrative,—that "he bare our ſins in his own body upon "the tree †;"—that "he gave himſelf a ranſom "for all ‡;"—and that "he was made ſin for "us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made "the righteouſneſs of God in him §?" This is that ineſtimable doctrine which is the wonder and glory of the goſpel. The early Chriſtians exulted in it as the ſtrong foundation of all their hopes. And one ſhould think, that if ever there was a truth fitted to command the higheſt admiration, and the moſt tranſporting gratitude, it muſt be this.

Bleſſed be God, it is likewiſe a truth for which we have the fulleſt evidence in the ſacred volume. This was neceſſary to quiet the anxieties of conſcious guilt; and to give us that peace

* Acts xiii. 38. † 1 Pet. ii. 24.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 6. § 2 Cor. v. 21.

peace with God, which it was the gracious deſign of the goſpel to impart. Accordingly, it is there ſet forth, in a great variety of places, in the moſt expreſs and determinate language. There our Lord is not only repreſented as having expiated ſin by his death; but we are informed of the very manner in which this expiation was made:—That he was ſubſtituted in the room of the guilty;—that he ſuffered the puniſhment which their ſins deſerved;—that, in this way, he made ample ſatisfaction to the juſtice of his Father;—and, as his giving himſelf to death was likewiſe the higheſt act of obedience to his Father's will, he thereby procured, not only pardon, but acceptance and bleſſedneſs for all his ſaints. What other proper or natural ſenſe can be put, either upon the paſſages already recited, or upon the following affecting declarations: That "Chriſt gave him-"ſelf for our ſins*;"—that "he was wounded "for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our ini-"quities;"—that "the chaſtiſement of our "peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we

* Gal. i. 4.

" are healed * ;"—that " he once ſuffered for " ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might " bring us to God, being put to death in the " fleſh † ;"—that " he was made a curſe for " us ‡ ;"—and that " he hath redeemed us to " God by his blood §." Is it in the power of language to convey more clearly the idea of vicarious ſuffering, or ſuffering in the room and for the benefit of others, than is here expreſſed?

But, as it was neceſſary that a matter of ſuch vaſt importance to the encouragement and comfort of the ſinner ſhould be not only clearly, but early notified, without which indeed he would be in danger of ſinking into deſpair; we behold the attention and tenderneſs of God towards man, diſplayed in the inſtitution of ſacrifices immediately after the fatal period of the original apoſtaſy, which was both wonderfully fitted to bring him to the knowledge of this moſt intereſting doctrine, and to penetrate his ſoul with the

* Iſa. liii. 5.

† 1 Pet. iii. 18.

‡ Gal. iii. 18.

§ Rev. v. 9.

the affecting diſcoveries which it contains*. From the account of the ceremonial with which offerings of this kind were afterwards accompanied, and which, it is probable, in all its eſſential formalities had been originally enjoined,—the idea of a ſubſtitution muſt be manifeſt to every intelligent and impartial reader. What can

* I have here taken it for granted that the inſtitution of ſacrifice was divine; being perſuaded, that, were not the mind of man diſpoſed to call in queſtion almoſt every thing that comes before it, it could ſcarcely ever be diſputed. We find ſacrifices in practice within a ſhort period of the fall of man, and have reaſon to conclude that their commencement is to be dated from that fatal event, as the only method of acceſs by which he could then draw near unto God. We ſee God from the beginning expreſſing his approbation of that mode of worſhip. We ſee it continued with acceptance through the whole of the patriarchal ages: and when he was giving laws to a people, whom he had ſeparated for himſelf, he made ſacrifices ſuch an eſſential and neceſſary part of their worſhip, that without theſe they could have no acceſs into his gracious preſence. What a ſtrong preſumption is this that they derived their origin from his divine authority alone! Indeed the contrary ſuppoſition carries the ſtrongeſt maſk of incredibility along with it. As man could not diſcover the grand myſterious object to which ſacrifices ultimately referred, and to which a divine inſtitution alone could attach them; how could it ever have entered into his mind to offer them. Could he think it a likely way of appeaſing the vengeance

can more ſignificantly denote it than this neceſſary rite, that the hands of the offerer ſhould be laid upon the head of the ſacrifice before it was ſlain. This was, as it were, laying the guilt upon the devoted victim, which was immediately to ſuffer to make atonement for it: and the leading aim of the whole was to give a ſymbolical repreſentation, and an anticipating proſpect, of the manner in which ſin was to be borne by an infinitely greater ſacrifice which was to be offered for it.

As

vengeance of heaven, to deſtroy the very creatures which God had made, and which he daily ſupported, under pretence of offering them to him in ſacrifice? Could he entertain ſo groſs a notion as to imagine that God would eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Or, if he did, muſt he not, like Iſrael of old, have met with a ſevere reproof from the Almighty, for ſuch an inſult to his perfection, and ſuch an indignity offered to the glory of his character? Finally, ſhall we ſuppoſe with ſome, that ſacrifices might ariſe originally from a natural ſentiment of the human mind, as an attempt to procure the favour of God by hardſhips and loſſes which men were willing to impoſe upon themſelves? What is this but to reduce them to the notion of penances? one of the greateſt corruptions of the truth that hitherto appeared; and, therefore, inſtead of being acceptable to God, they muſt have been rejected by him with abhorrence.

As this myſterious inſtitution, then, miniſtered the moſt important information to the antients, it is a confirming evidence of the truth even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. We ſee that the method of ſaving ſinners from deſtruction in every age has been the ſame. Our conceptions of the great ſacrifice itſelf, receive a friendly aid from the reflection of that light by which *they* were led forward to behold it; and we can enter more fully into the meaning of thoſe Scriptures where it is ſaid, that "Chriſt "was once offered to bear the ſins of many;"—that "the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us "all;"—and that "God (in his ſacrifice) con-"demned ſin in the fleſh."

What ſtronger evidence could be deſired for this precious doctrine than what has now been produced? Language cannot more forcibly expreſs it. And to ſhew that it is one of the moſt eſſential principles of revelation, it is woven into its very texture from beginning to end.

But, perhaps, it will be ſaid, How can ſuch a doctrine proceed from God? Is it not contrary to the firſt principle of juſtice? Is it not

to

to reward men for a ſervice which they have not performed, and to puniſh the innocent that the guilty may go free? How much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God will receive the returning ſinner without any atonement! Does he ſtand in need of a compenſation for the evil which we have done? "If we ſin, what do we "againſt him? and if our tranſgreſſions be mul-"tiplied, what do we unto him?"

And will men oppoſe their weak and narrow reaſonings to the plaineſt teſtimony of the word of God; and that, too, in a matter which is evidently beyond their comprehenſion? Or, do they mean to employ them as arguments againſt its authenticity, becauſe it incorporates into its very frame a doctrine ſo apparently abſurd and incredible? This would be the moſt fair and conſiſtent conduct. But I addreſs myſelf only to thoſe who acknowledge its divine authority. Come, then, let us reaſon together for a moment upon this intereſting point.

You conceive that ſin may very well be remitted without any atonement, without any penal ſatisfaction for it. But, can you ſhew clearly that God has ever acted upon this prin-

ple,

ciple in a ſingle inſtance? Are you ſure that you know all the reaſons that God can have for the puniſhment of ſin; and that there is nothing, either in his character, or in the ends of his government, that makes it neceſſary to inflict it? Are you ſure that juſtice does not require it; and that the truth of God may be broken, which is pledged for it? But, not to ſpeak either of the juſtice or faithfulneſs of God; muſt not his holineſs itſelf, and the infinite abhorrence of ſin which belongs to his very nature, lead him to treat it with all that awful ſeverity which it deſerves? How unbecoming is it, then, to advance ſuch a groundleſs aſſertion, eſpecially when the evidence certainly lies upon the oppoſite ſide?

But you are confident that the atoning ſacrifice of Chriſt cannot be admitted, becauſe vicarious puniſhment is contrary to the very nature of juſtice.

Now it is ſurely ſomewhat ſtrange, if it be ſo contrary to all our notions of juſtice, that an opinion of this kind ſhould have univerſally prevailed. Nothing is more certain than that it has made a part of all the religions, both

true

true and falſe, that ever appeared in the world; the ſeveral votaries of which, however widely they have differed in other reſpects, have united in the belief, that ſin may be expiated by vicarious ſufferings, or ſufferings in the room and for the benefit of others. Whence, then, has this univerſal opinion been derived? If it is the dictate of nature, or of experience, then the diſpute is at an end. If it has been derived from revelation, the only other ſource of information with which we are acquainted, the diſpute will be equally at an end. For, I preſume, you will not chooſe to maintain, againſt the prevailing voice, either of nature, of experience, or of revelation, that the ends of juſtice cannot be anſwered by accepting a ſatisfaction from a ſubſtitute who is able and willing to give it.

Still, however, you cannot but reject the doctrine of imputation, as at once abſurd and iniquitous; becauſe merit and demerit are altogether perſonal, and cannot be transferred to thoſe to whom they do not really belong; nor can the rewards or puniſhments be transferred which are annexed to them.

If, by the transference of merit or demerit, you mean, that the perſonal guilt or righteouſneſs of one becomes the perſonal guilt or righteouſneſs of another,—this is a poſition which no Chriſtian, who underſtands what he ſays, will ever maintain: and it is ſo far from receiving any countenance from the doctrine of imputation, that it is evidently excluded by it. It is blaſphemy to ſuppoſe that our Lord contracted any perſonal guilt, by the ſins of his people being laid upon him when he was bearing the chaſtiſement of their peace: and if it were poſſible, by any means, that what was perſonal righteouſneſs or merit in him, ſhould become perſonal righteouſneſs or merit in us,—then it would not be imputed, for it would be truly and properly our own. But does it therefore follow, that the guilt or righteouſneſs of one cannot be ſo far devolved upon another, or reckoned to his account, as that he ſhall ſuffer or be rewarded for it? A calm and thoughtful inquirer will certainly be cautious of hazarding ſuch an aſſertion, leſt he ſhould run in oppoſition to matter of fact and experience.

It is not a little remarkable, that it ſeems to

be the very conſtitution of Providence, in this world, that one ſet of creatures ſhould derive their ſupport and enjoyment from the ſufferings, and even from the deſtruction of their fellow-creatures around them. When we examine the inferior creation, what vaſt multitudes of the irrational tribes do we ſee daily yielding up their lives for the ſubſiſtence and benefit of others! what numbers of them are continually put to death for the nouriſhment and comfort of man! Nay, do we not behold even the lower orders of the human ſpecies themſelves miniſtering, by their toils and hardſhips and ſufferings, to the eaſe and convenience and enjoyment of the reſt? It is true there is nothing of imputation in any of theſe caſes. Notwithſtanding, they leſſen the difficulties on this intereſting point. For, if it be the plan of God, in the natural world, that the good of ſome is promoted by the ſufferings and ſervices of others; why may not the government of the moral world admit of a ſimilar principle? If we find in experience that our temporal intereſt is often promoted by the labours and ſufferings of others; nay, that we are delivered even from

from diſtreſs and calamity by their intervention, and ſometimes by their ſuſtaining the very ſtroke which was ready to deſtroy us;—why ſhould it appear incredible that our ſpiritual intereſt ſhould be advanced in a ſimilar manner, and that we ſhould be delivered from that load of vengeance, which would ſink us down to everlaſting perdition, by the friendly intervention of one who is able to ſuſtain all its weight?

But, what is more directly to the point before us, it is one of the moſt obvious truths relating to human life, that the effects of the good or bad actions of men are not confined to the perſons themſelves by whom they are performed: they ſpread a correſponding influence around them, to a greater or ſmaller extent, wherever they are found. How are the families of thoſe, for example, who have been eminently diſtinguiſhed as public benefactors to mankind, eſteemed and careſſed by all who know them! On the other hand, How does the deteſtation in which thoſe are held, who have been the ſcourges and peſts of ſociety, deſcend in ſome meaſure upon their very offſpring, ſo that it requires more than ordinary character in theſe to countervail it!

It

It muſt indeed be confeſſed, that there is no inſtance, but that of the great atonement itſelf, in which men have been delivered from guilt by ſufferings which are not their own: for this plain reaſon, that no ſufferings of a mere creature could make that ſatisfaction which juſtice requires. We have, however, many undoubted examples of what perhaps it is not leſs difficult to account for;—men ſuffering in the righteous judgement of God, and ſometimes immediately and viſibly from his hand, not for their own ſins only, but likewiſe for thoſe of others. Let it not be thought that ſuch ſufferings are only of an outward or temporal nature. This has often been maintained in order to evade the argument ariſing from them. But, the following inſtances will ſhew that it is far from being the caſe.

What is the ſituation to which the Jewiſh people are reduced for an offence which was committed by their fathers more than ſeventeen hundred years ago! Is it only temporal diſgrace or diſadvantage to which they are ſubjected? Alas! this is the leaſt part of the indignation which has been poured upon them.

If we believe the apoſtle Paul, they are labouring under ſpiritual judgement,—the heavieſt of all calamities: for "God hath given them the "ſpirit of ſlumber, eyes that they ſhould not "ſee, and ears that they ſhould not hear, unto "this day *."——How melancholy is the ſtate to which the poſterity of thoſe who compoſed the ancient churches of Aſia are now reduced, becauſe their fathers repented not at the call of the Redeemer, when he threatened to remove his candleſtick out of its place! Are they not now deprived of the light and grace of the goſpel, which they would otherwiſe have enjoyed, and ſitting in the region and ſhadow of death? ——And, how deplorable is the condition of thoſe who are ſunk in the corruption and idolatry of antichriſt! Are they not ſuffering that awful judgement with which God viſited their fathers, when he "ſent them ſtrong deluſion, "that they ſhould believe a lie; becauſe they "received not the love of the truth, that they "might be ſaved †?"

What is this now but the doctrine of imputation

* Rom. xi. 8. † 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11.

tation verified and vindicated by experience itſelf? And will it ſtill be traduced as unworthy of God, when we ſee it a part of that order which he has eſtabliſhed, and one of the evident priciples upon which his goverment proceeds? The inſtances which have been recited are awful and ſtanding monuments of it. And though we could expunge it entirely from the ſacred code, yet, like the articles which have been formerly mentioned, it would ſtill remain; for we ſhould meet with it in one ſhape or another in almoſt every occurrence that paſſes before us. The inſtitution of ſacrifice, as I have particularly ſhewn, had familiarized the idea of atonement to the human mind from very early times. And how many are the inſtances of thoſe that we continually meet with, in whom that proverb is truly fulfilled, that *other men laboured, and they have entered into their labours?* Is it not aſtoniſhing, then, that men, profeſſing fair and candid principles, ſhould charge that as an incredibility upon revelation, which they are obliged to admit as a part of the plan of Providence itſelf?

But, there are two circumſtances reſpecting the

the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, which, when carefully conſidered, will in a great meaſure remove the difficulties which attend it. The firſt is, that it was voluntarily offered, by one who had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again; and, therefore, neither was it incompetent for him to devote himſelf to ſufferings and death, nor could any injury be done by inflicting them upon him. The ſecond is, that it was a ſatisfaction by a kindred ſubſtitute, ſo intimately related, and indeed united, to thoſe for whom it was made, that "they are "members of his body, and of his fleſh, and of "his bones."

This is a truth of vaſt magnitude in the Chriſtian ſcheme, though the pride of human reaſon has ſhewn the ſame averſion to it as to moſt of the other doctrines which the goſpel contains. Men cannot underſtand the principle upon which ſuch an union is conſtituted: therefore they pronounce it impoſſible that it can exiſt; and go about to explain into inſignificance the ſtrong and impreſſive language in which God has been pleaſed to reveal it. But do they clearly underſtand the principle which conſtitutes

conſtitutes unity, either in the natural or moral world, in the various inſtances that come before them? Thoſe who are accuſtomed to ſpeculations of this kind will readily acknowledge that they are involved in much greater obſcurity than is commonly imagined. And yet, upon the ſcore of ignorance alone, not the union between Chriſt and his diſciples only has been rejected, but likewiſe the union between the divine and human natures in his wonderful perſon, and the union of the Father and the Son, in whom, notwithſtanding the diverſity of perſons, the divinity is the ſame.

I mean not, however, to enter into any defence or illuſtration at preſent of the Chriſtian's union with his divine Lord. The Scripture undoubtedly repreſents it in a great variety of beautiful and ſtriking images, employing the moſt intimate unities in nature to denote it *. And, if it only be admitted as a principle, and applied to the ſubject which is now before us, it will ſet the doctrine of imputation and ſubſtitution in a conſiſtent and intelligible view. For where

* See John xv. 5. Eph. ii. 20, 21. and iv. 15, 16.

where is the difficulty in conceiving, according to the ſtricteſt rule of juſtice, that Chriſt ſhould bear the puniſhment which was due to his people's ſins, and that his righteouſneſs and merits ſhould be reckoned to their account; when they are conjoined together in ſo intimate a manner, that he is the head, and they are the members of his body, and make up "the fulneſs of him," or as it were the completeneſs of his perſon, "who filleth all in all *."

Behold, now, what full and ſatisfying evidence we have for this precious doctrine of the atonement and merits of Chriſt, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God; and how it remains firm and unſhaken amidſt the ſtrongeſt efforts of human wiſdom to overthrow it! Upon this principle, the ſcripture revelation ſtands forth at once intelligible and conſiſtent:—The antient inſtitution of ſacrifice appears to have been of the moſt important and neceſſary uſe;—the glory of the divine perfection is highly illuſtrated;—the comfort of the humbled ſinner is ſecured;—and even experi-

* Eph. i. 23.

ence lends its aid in confirmation of the truth. But, in maintaining the contrary ſuppoſition, every thing is thrown into obſcurity and diſorder: —The Scripture becomes unintelligible;—the antient ſacrifices are little better than childiſh ceremonies;—the character of God is defaced; —the ſenſible ground of the ſinner's comfort is withdrawn;—and the Chriſtian doctrine is oppoſed by reaſonings, which, before they can be of any avail, muſt annihilate fact, and unhinge the meaſures of Providence in the government of the world.

I cannot leave this part of the ſubject, without taking notice of what is ſet up in the room of the true and proper atonement of Chriſt, by thoſe who have laboured to deprive us of it. The moſt of Chriſtians admit of ſomething which they call atonement; though many of them reject it in the only ſenſe in which it can juſtly be underſtood. They acknowledge that the death of Chriſt was an expiatory ſacrifice for ſin; and that God, out of regard to this ſacrifice, condeſcends to pardon the believing penitent. Notwithſtanding this, they ſtrenuouſly deny that our iniquities were in any ſenſe devolved

volved on him, or that he made any penal ſatisfaction for them: and they tell us, that the atonement of Chriſt is only a wiſe expedient, which God has introduced, to prevent men from imagining that mercy is a facility in the divine Nature, and to deter them from ſin, by raiſing up this awful monument of his indignation againſt it.

It is not a little ſurpriſing that this account of the atonement ſhould be propoſed and adopted by men of ability and diſcernment, as that which reaſon and Scripture concur to authenticate, when it runs in direct oppoſition to both. At firſt ſight, indeed, it carries a plauſible aſpect; but, when attentively examined, it will appear fraught with abſurdity and contradiction. If our iniquities were in no ſenſe devolved upon Chriſt; if the ſufferings which he endured had nothing to do with the puniſhment of our guilt; and if the hand of juſtice was no way concerned in theſe ſufferings;—with what propriety of language can the Scripture affirm, that "our iniquities were laid upon him;" that "he ſuffered and died for our ſins;" and that "God ſet him forth a propitiation, through

" faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs " for the remiſſion of ſins;—that he might be " juſt, and the juſtifier of him who believeth in " Jeſus!" If theſe, and ſuch expreſſions as theſe, with which the Scripture abounds, muſt be underſtood in ſo ſtrange and unnatural a meaning as to exclude entirely the ſenſe which they obviouſly contain; we need not heſitate to pronounce, that they are the worſt choſen, and the moſt calculated to miſlead, that were ever employed by any writer.

But let us liſten to the voice of reaſon itſelf upon the ſubject. Where is the wiſdom of this ſingular expedient upon the principles that are here laid down? How can the ſufferings of perfect rectitude, without any imputation of guilt to occaſion them, be conſidered as a monument of God's indignation againſt ſin? In this view, ſhould we not rather be led to conclude, that his indignation was pointed at a very different object, when we behold innocence ſuffering without any adequate cauſe that can be aſſigned for it? And is it not quite inconceivable, how all the pains and agonies which the Saviour indured, can deter men from ſin,

if

if they are by no means to be underſtood as the puniſhment of it? Muſt we then, in rejecting the only foundation of a ſinner's hope, admit all theſe groſs and palpable abſurdities:—that the Scripture is beſt underſtood in the ſenſe which appears moſt contrary to it;—that the indignation of God againſt ſin is moſt awfully diſplayed when it ſeems to be pointed at innocence and rectitude;—and that the moſt effectual way of deterring men from iniquity, is to exhibit a ſcene of the deepeſt ſuffering which is quite unconnected with the puniſhment of it? At leaſt, let us beware of aſcribing ſuch a ſcheme to the wiſdom of God, which is one of the greateſt demonſtrations of the weakneſs and folly of man. You ſee then, that there is no other alternative, but either flatly to deny the doctrine of atonement altogether, or elſe to receive the plain Scripture account of it, as a ſatisfaction which Chriſt made to the juſtice of his Father by bearing the puniſhment which our ſins deſerved; for there is nothing which can be ſet up as a medium between theſe, which does not evidently betray its falſe and ſpurious origin.

I ſhall have occaſion afterwards to ſhew, that this

this doctrine, ſo far from being unfriendly to the intereſts of holineſs, ſupplies its moſt animating motives. In the mean time, let me only obſerve, that, as it is of the utmoſt importance in itſelf, in every view in which it can be contemplated, it is likewiſe ſuch a radical principle in the ſcheme of our redemption, that moſt of the other diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the goſpel will ſtand or fall with it. They who believe the true ſcripture doctrine of the atonement and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, muſt of courſe believe his real and proper deity. For, were he not poſſeſſed of divine perfection and excellency, it is impoſſible that he could either have borne the weight of Almighty vengeance in expiating human guilt, or that, by the merit of his obedience he could have procured the richeſt bleſſings of heaven for an inheritance to his ſaints. On the other hand, as it is highly incredible, that a perſon of infinite perfection and dignity ſhould have come down from heaven to earth, merely to publiſh a doctrine which was more fully revealed by his apoſtles after him, and to die a martyr for its truth, which has been done by many of his diſciples with leſs anxiety

and

and apprehenſion than he diſcovered ; we find, in fact, thoſe who reject this precious doctrine, diſparaging the dignity of the Redeemer, and, in the awful language of Scripture, " denying " the Lord that bought them, and bringing up- " on themſelves ſwift deſtruction." And as there is no higher evidence for the divine perſonality of the Holy Spirit than for that of the Son, this likewiſe is given up ; the conſequence of which is, that the whole doctrine of ſanctification, which is aſcribed to his influence, falls to the ground. In a word, if this pillar and ſtay of the truth be once removed, the whole fabric of Chriſtianity will be laid in ruins ; and the forlorn and helpleſs ſinner, bereaved of his only ſecurity and comfort, muſt be driven for ſhelter to the miſerable patch-work of human invention, which, in the day of trial and deciſion, will be ſwept entirely away.

Think now, ye humble followers of a crucified Lord ! in what high eſtimation you ſhould hold this intereſting doctrine. What proſpects of God, of providence, and of grace, does it lay open to your view ! Here alone you ſee the character of God unmutilated and conſiſtent,

and

and his plans harmonious. Here you behold the glory of his perfection moſt radiantly diſplayed, in the united exerciſe of juſtice, and mercy, and ſanctity, and truth; in that ſcheme of his unſearchable wiſdom which the higheſt created intelligences contemplate with admiration. From this doctrine, likewiſe, what a divine tranquillity, and what a lively hope, do you happily experience! You feel your ſouls at once humbled and purified and exalted by it. And O! when that ſolemn period ſhall arrive, which ſhall introduce you into the preſence of your Saviour and of your God, how will you triumph and exult in it! Then ſhall you join the heavenly church, with equal accents, in that enraptured ſong,—"Unto him "that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins "in his own blood, and hath made us kings "and prieſts unto God and his Father, to him "be glory and dominion for ever." And again, "Salvation to our God who ſitteth upon the "throne, and unto the Lamb."

II. The other very momentous doctrine, in which the method of our ſalvation is ſtill farther

unfolded, is now to be conſidered. It has already been announced in the following terms: —That it is only by the all-powerful energy of the Holy Spirit upon the ſoul, that we can be renewed and ſanctified after the image of God.

If mankind are really in ſuch a ſtate of corruption, as that in which the Scripture repreſents them till they are recovered by the grace of the goſpel; we need no other evidence to convince us of the neceſſity of ſupernatural divine influence to the converſion and ſanctification of every ſinner. There they are repreſented as "dead in treſpaſſes and ſins *." Their very mind, it is ſaid, "is carnal, is enmity againſt "God; and is not ſubject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be." From which it is peremptorily concluded, that "they that are in "the fleſh," that is, in the corrupt ſtate of nature, "cannot pleaſe God †." Mankind, then, being thus loſt in corruption, and in ſpiritual death, can only be revived and purified by the power of almighty grace.

The Scripture informs us, that the Spirit of

 God

* Eph. ii. 1. † Rom. viii. 7, 8.

God is the divine operator in this great work: That, by his wonderful agency, thoſe that were dead in ſins are quickened * ;—that they paſs from death to life † ;—that " they are born " again ‡," being, as it were, introduced into a new ſtate of exiſtence, and endowed with deſires, affections, and diſpoſitions, correſponding to it ;—that they become " new creatures §," and " are ſaved by the waſhing of regeneration and " renewing of the Holy Ghoſt ‖ ;"—that " the " eyes of their underſtanding are opened ¶ ;" and whereas formerly they were darkneſs, now " they are light in the Lord ** ;"—and that their principles of action, and the great objects of their purſuit, are entirely changed. " Old " things are paſſed away ; behold, all things " are become new †† !" The Scripture likewiſe informs us, that, to accompliſh theſe purpoſes of unmerited and ſovereign grace, the Spirit of God is " given to them ‡‡ ;"—that he " dwells " within

* Epheſ. ii. 1.
† 1 John iii. 14.
‡ John iii. 3.
§ 2 Cor. v. 17.
‖ Tit. iii. 5.
¶ Acts xxvi. 18.
** Epheſ. v. 8.
†† 2 Cor. v. 17.
‡‡ 1 John iii. 24.

" within them *, and abides with them for ever †;" —that they are " led by the Spirit ‡;"—that, through his influence, " they mortify the deeds of " the body §," and bring forth his genuine " fruit, which is in all goodneſs, and righteouſ- " neſs, and truth, proving what is acceptable un- " to the Lord ‖:" and thus God not only " begins " the good work" in the ſoul, but " performs " it unto the day of Jeſus Chriſt ¶; working " in them both to will and to do of his good " pleaſure **."

Theſe, and many other paſſages of the New Teſtament, do moſt certainly declare, not only the neceſſity of divine ſupernatural influence, but likewiſe its ſure and infallible efficacy in the converſion and ſanctification of every ſinner. Nay, they aſcribe the whole of that bleſſed work, from beginning to end, to the all-quickening and purifying grace of the Holy Ghoſt. And that man muſt have a ſtrange averſion to the truth as it is in Jeſus, who can

pervert

* Rom. viii. 11.
† John xiv. 16.
‡ Rom. viii. 14.
§ Rom. viii. 13.
‖ Epheſ. v. 9, 10.
¶ Philip. i. 6.
** Philip. ii. 13.

pervert them to any different meaning. How indeed is it poſſible, with any degree of plauſibility, to diveſt them of this their native and obvious import? Will it be ſaid, that the giving of the Spirit to Chriſtians, is to be underſtood only of the communication of his miraculous powers to the church, which have been long ſince withdrawn? Melancholy would the conſequence of this evaſion be: For, then, it would neceſſarily follow, that Chriſtians could not any longer be "renewed and ſanctified into o-"bedience," nor could they "mortify the "deeds of the body," or ceaſe to "fulfil the "luſts of the fleſh;" becauſe all theſe effects are as really aſcribed to the operation of the ſpirit, as caſting out devils, or making the lame to walk. And it cannot be ſhewn, that now, more than formerly, "any one can bring a "clean thing out of an unclean, but God "only."

Will it then be pretended, that the quickening and ſanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit is nothing more than the effect of the ſuperior light and power of the goſpel revelation, which poſſeſſes the diſtinguiſhing character of "the

" miniſtration of the Spirit," and the very words of which are ſaid " to be ſpirit and to be " life?" Upon this interpretation we ſhould never have read, that " Paul planted, and A- " pollos watered, but God gave the increaſe *;" —that " the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, " that ſhe might attend to the things that were " ſpoken of Paul †;"—and that when the preaching of the goſpel was followed with remarkable ſucceſs, " it came not in word only, but " in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt, and with " much aſſurance ‡." Upon this principle likewiſe we ſhould never have heard ſuch prayers for Chriſtians as theſe:—" That the Spirit of " wiſdom and revelation might be given them §;" —that they " might be comforted and ſtabliſh- " ed in every good word and work ‖;"—and " that the God of peace might ſanctify them " wholly, working in them that which is well " pleaſing in his ſight ¶;"—nor could the Apoſtles have given thanks to God in their behalf, " becauſe he had choſen them to ſalva- " tion

* 1 Cor. iii. 6.
† Acts xvi. 14.
‡ 1 Theſſ. i. 5.
§ Eph. i. 17.
‖ 2 Theſſ. ii. 17.
¶ 1 Theſſ. v. 23. & Heb. xiii. 21.

" tion through ſanctification of the Spirit and " belief of the truth *." In all theſe inſtances, a divine ſupernatural energy, quite diſtinct from the word, and abſolutely neceſſary to give it effect, is too evidently ſuppoſed for any fair and reaſonable man to deny it.

I ſay nothing about the ſcheme of reducing all the high and honourable appellations, by which Chriſtians are diſtinguiſhed in the New Teſtament, to the mean inadequate ſenſe of denoting only the outward privileges of the goſpel which wicked men may enjoy as well as the ſaints. Were it deſerving of credit, it would indeed ſubvert the whole method of ſalvation which the Scripture lays down. But is it poſſible to believe, that the Spirit of truth and of holineſs, ſhould call thoſe who are the ſlaves of ſin, *children of God*, *new creatures*, *faithful*, *ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus*, and by ſuch like applications, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they have enjoyed the privileges of the goſpel diſpenſation, while they have perverted and abuſed them all; and thereby have made themſelves

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 13.

themſelves much more the children of hell, than if the word of ſalvation had never reached their ears? This is ſuch an inſult to the common ſenſe of mankind, that it is not intitled to a ſerious refutation. But unluckily for the inventors of this ſcheme, it cannot entirely exclude the work of the Spirit upon the ſouls of Chriſtians, notwithſtanding all the length which it has been carried. For, we have already ſeen, that even after they have attained the diſpoſitions and habits of holineſs, they are repreſented as led by the Spirit in every inſtance of their exertion. And if his divine energies are neceſſary to the ſaints, even in the moſt advanced ſtages of their character on earth, how can we ſuppoſe that that character could be originally formed without them?

But though the ſchemes which have been deviſed to explain away the precious doctrines of the goſpel were attended with no abſurdities, one ſhould think that men of ſenſibility would almoſt bluſh to reject them with ſo great violence, conſidering what poor proviſion they make to ſupply their room. This is no where more remarkable than with reſpect to the renewing

newing and ſanctifying grace of God. What contemptible effect have the fineſt theories of virtue produced where this doctrine has been neglected? I cannot better expreſs myſelf upon this point than in the words of a late excellent writer. Speaking of the enemies of this doctrine, he ſays, " Their conduct ſhews that " their morality conſiſts chiefly in fruitleſs ſpe- " culations, and that their ſchemes are contriv- " ed and made uſe of for amuſement, more " than any thing elſe. They may have the " ſame effect with other arts and ſciences, to " gratify men's curioſity, and perhaps their " vanity; but the art of making men truly vir- " tuous and happy, by their own ſkill and " ſtrength is not yet invented. The reſult of " all efforts of this kind has only been, to ex- " poſe the weakneſs and folly of the undertak- " ers, and to confirm the truth of the goſpel, " and the neceſſity of the grace which is offer- " ed in it *."

But this doctrine, in the manner in which we have ſtated it from the word of God, has not eſcaped

* M'Laurin's Eſſays.

eſcaped the cenſure even of thoſe who hold the general notion of divine influence upon the mind. It will therefore be neceſſary, in juſtice to the ſubject, to conſider the chief objections which they have brought againſt it; which indeed are, for the moſt part, the ſame with thoſe which infidels themſelves have inſiſted on.

In the firſt place, then, it has been ſtrongly urged, that if men by nature are unable to perform any thing that is ſpiritually good, it is in vain for them to attempt it, and it is moſt inconſiſtent in thoſe who maintain this principle to exhort them to it.

When we reflect, that the doctrine of rich and ſovereign grace is held out in the goſpel as the remedy for the evil which is here complained of, and is offered to every ſinner who is deſirous to receive it; this objection is diveſted of all its force. With what colour of reaſon can a man pretend to excuſe himſelf from the performance of his duty, becauſe of the diſability which is natural to him, when he is warranted to have recourſe to almighty aid? And where is the inconſiſtency, upon this well adapted plan, in the miniſters of Chriſt addreſſing to ſinners,

the inſtructions, and warnings, and calls of the goſpel, when they are the very means which God has appointed, of awakening them to ſpiritual ſenſibility, of convincing them of their weakneſs, as well as of their miſery, and of leading them to that grace by which out of weakneſs they may be made ſtrong?

But the chief deception upon this point ariſes from overlooking or miſtaking the diſtinctive character of that inability in which man is involved. It does not conſiſt in the want of natural faculties and talents for the ſervice of God; for theſe are the very principles by which he is conſtituted a reaſonable and moral agent; but it conſiſts in a total and obſtinate diſlike to thoſe holy exerciſes for which they were originally beſtowed. Were this rightly underſtood and attended to, it would effectually deprive the ſinner of every plea which he could offer in his own excuſe. It is impoſſible for him to deny, that the faculties and talents which he poſſeſſes, might be as fitly and profitably employed in the ſervice of God, as in the ſlavery of ſin. He is obliged likewiſe to acknowledge, that conſcience itſelf condemns him for applying

ing

ing them to any different purpoſe. But then he feels ſuch an extreme and fixed averſion to that ſervice, that he cannot in good earneſt bring his mind and his heart to engage in it. And what is the conſequence? Will he be ſo unreaſonable as to ſuppoſe, that his obligation to duty is diſſolved by his unwillingneſs to perform it? As well might a debtor expect to be excuſed from the payment of what he owed, becauſe he had ſuch a ſtrong and unconquerable attachment to his pelf, that he could not poſſibly part with it. Upon this clear and evident principle, then, every mouth muſt be ſtopped; and the ſinner muſt be conſcious of his obligation, even while the perverſity of his nature is diſpoſed to remonſtrate againſt it; for it is impoſſible to ſet up any reaſonable plea in his defence.

Men do not ſeem to underſtand what they ſay, when they repreſent a ſinner as having ground, either to murmur at this doctrine, or to draw apologies and excuſes from it. While he remains inſenſible of his inability, he ſurely can neither be ſuppoſed to complain of it, nor can it prevent him from exerting any of thoſe fancied

fancied powers which he may imagine he poſſeſſes. And to ſuppoſe him to feel and to reject it, with the remedy full in his offer, and yet not to avail himſelf of ſo great a privilege, is a ſtate of the human mind which is quite inconceivable. The very diſcovery of his forlorn and wretched condition muſt make him to feel the neceſſity and value of the offered mercy. And it is as unnatural to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould not inſtantly and thankfully receive, as to ſuppoſe, that a man ready to periſh for want would reject a morſel of bread that was given him for his relief. Indeed, to ſpeak more properly, whenever the ſinner is deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of that obſtinate averſion to what is good in which his inability conſiſts, and is anxious to counteract it, this ought to be conſidered as the remedy in ſome meaſure already applied; for this deſire in the very nature of the caſe muſt deſtroy the averſion ſo far as it goes. It is therefore a moſt encouraging preſumption that the work of grace is begun in his ſoul. And O! when it ſhall have accompliſhed its grand atchievements, and when he ſhall have taſted its bleſſed and wonderful fruits, how will

will he ſtand aſtoniſhed at the riches of divine and ſovereign mercy to him! With what humility and ſelf-abaſement will he acknowledge, that juſtly might God have left him for ever to thoſe perverſe diſpoſitions to which he was formerly a willing captive! And how will his heart burn with gratitude for that unmerited grace by which he has obtained ſo great a deliverance!

I ſhould ſcarcely take notice of the objection againſt the abſolute efficacy of this grace, that it is inconſiſtent with the liberty of human actions, were it not that it ſtill continues to be urged with a kind of apparent triumph. Nothing can be more devoid of any ſhadow of evidence than this objection. It proceeds equally from a lamentable ignorance of the nature of divine influence in the converſion and ſanctification of a ſinner, and of the very conſtitution of the human mind. I appeal to the common underſtanding and judgement of mankind. Is it not the very nature of the human mind to be influenced by the truth, when it is made ſtrongly to perceive it? Is the mind leſs voluntary in its operations, by being ſubject to that influence?

influence? On the contrary, does it not more cordially chooſe, and more firmly and unalterably acquieſce in the choice which it has made, the more it is determined by its prevailing energy? And will any man preſume to aſſert, that the Spirit of God cannot open the eyes of the mind, and, in a manner perfectly conſentaneous to its rational and moral character, give it ſuch a perception of the infinitely intereſting objects of religion and eternity, as ſhall infallibly attach the will and the affections to them? And where the determination is ſtill a matter of choice, although of a choice that can ſcarcely admit of a moment's heſitation, it cannot ſurely be ſaid that any violence is done to the liberty of the human mind, or that any ſort of reſtraint is impoſed upon it. This charge, then, appears utterly deſtitute of all foundation in truth; and I have choſen to combat it upon theſe obvious principles, as level to the capacities of ordinary Chriſtians, rather than by entering into any of thoſe bewildering ſpeculations which it has ſo often occaſioned *.

One

* I am not however of opinion, that the whole of the Spirit's

One other objection it may be proper to conſider. It is this: That, if the grace of God be ſo infallible in its operation that it effectually converts and ſanctifies the ſinner who receives it, then it cannot be the privilege of all men. But this, it is alleged, is contrary to the moſt expreſs declarations of Scripture,—that "God "will have all men to be ſaved, and to come "to the knowledge of the truth*;" and that "he is long-ſuffering to us ward, not willing "that

rit's influence, in the converſion of a ſinner, is confined to illumination alone. Not to ſpeak of the energy which is requiſite to quicken the ſoul that is dead in ſin, ſo great is the force of evil habits, that the new convert muſt enter very aukwardly upon his Chriſtian courſe, and feel much reſiſtance from their influence, unleſs it were removed by a ſupernatural power. But experience ſhews us that this is far from being the caſe. Let the hiſtory of the ſaints declare how many trophies of grace have been raiſed up even of thoſe who have been under the moſt inveterate habits of ſin, who have inſtantly engaged in the ſervice of religion, and performed its moſt difficult duties with as much readineſs and eaſe as if they had been accuſtomed to them from their earlieſt years. This cannot be accounted for upon the principle of mere illumination. But as it lies beyond the limits of the above objection, it is not neceſſary at preſent to enlarge upon it.

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

" that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould " come to repentance *." As this objection is an appeal to ſeveral paſſages of Scripture, it will be ſufficient to repel it, if it can be ſhewn, that they give it neither foundation nor ſupport.

In the firſt of theſe paſſages, the apoſtle cannot be underſtood to ſpeak of individuals, but of ranks, and orders, and bodies of men. This is evident from his exhorting that " prayers, " and ſupplications, and giving of thanks, be " made for all men;" that is, for perſons in all the various ranks and conditions of life, and particularly, " for kings, and for all that are in " authority." To inforce this, he obſerves, " that it is good and acceptable in the ſight of " God our Saviour, who will have all men to " be ſaved." As the reaſon therefore ought not to be ſtretched beyond the ſubject to which it is applied, the meaning can only be, that ſalvation was not to be confined to any one nation or rank or order of men whatever. It was to be extended to perſons of every condition; and even heathen kings and rulers themſelves were

* 2 Pet. iii. 9.

were to come to the knowledge of the truth, who had leaſt opportunity of being acquainted with it. This intimation was admirably fitted to ſoften the prejudices of the Jewiſh converts againſt their Pagan neighbours, and to prevent Chriſtians in thoſe times from imagining that ſalvation was to be confined to the poor; a miſtake into which they might readily fall, becauſe "not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many "mighty, not many noble were called."

With reſpect to the other paſſage, it is confeſſedly very obſcure, and hard to be underſtood. It can ſcarcely be doubted that it is of a prophetical nature; and it probably refers to the future converſion of the whole Jewiſh nation, an event which muſt take place before the coming of the day of the Lord *. At any rate it is plain, that it cannot be underſtood in the ſenſe which this objection requires, were it only for the reaſon which the paſſage itſelf aſſigns. It would be a ſtrange reaſon indeed, for the long delay of the coming of the day of the Lord, to any generation of men to whom it

* See Mede's expoſition of 2 Pet. chap. iii.

could hitherto be addreſſed, to tell them, " that " God was not willing that any of them ſhould " periſh." If it had been the day of their death that was delayed on this account, that more means might be uſed for their ſalvation, and that if poſſible they might be perſuaded to turn from the evil and live, the argument would have been both intelligible and affecting; but when that ſolemn period arrives, then the long-ſuffering of God towards ſinners is finiſhed: then their character can never be altered. No calls to repentance can be addreſſed to them any more. And it cannot have the ſmalleſt effect in bettering their condition, whether the day of the Lord ſhould come immediately after their departure out of this world, or ſhould be delayed for thouſands of years *.

Let

* It muſt ſurely be matter of regret to the friends of religion, that the Scripture ſhould be interpreted in ſuch a manner, whether from inadvertency or from any other cauſe, as to make the Spirit of truth uſe arguments, and aſſign reaſons, which would not be received from any ordinary author. The above are the only paſſages in the New Teſtament where the ſuppoſed declaration ſeems to be expreſly made; and yet we have ſeen that they have no ſuch meaning. I have therefore

Let none however preſume to draw any ſuch conſequence from this doctrine, as that the calls of the goſpel are not addreſſed with ſincerity and earneſtneſs to all who hear them. There is indeed a difficulty here which we cannot fully reſolve. But this difficulty will recur upon us with equal force on every ſcheme. We may find it hard to reconcile the many expoſtulations that are addreſſed to all, to turn from their evil ways that they may live, and the great concern which is expreſſed for their ſalvation, by that God who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them whitherſoever he will, with any limitation of his grace to a determinate number. But we are as little able to reconcile them with the melancholy and fatal event that any ſhould finally periſh. And it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that this may be beyond the power of any created underſtanding. It is, however, only fulfilling the Scripture,

fore taken no notice of expreſſions of a ſimilar kind in other books of Scripture, being perſuaded, that when a doctrine is not revealed in the New Teſtament, which contains the cleareſt and fulleſt diſcovery of the mind of God, in vain do we look for it in the Old.

ture, " that God's ways are paſt finding out." The reaſons of the divine procedure ly often concealed from our view. And even if they were communicated to us, it might be doubtful, in many caſes, whether we ſhould be able to comprehend them. It becomes us therefore to receive with ſimplicity the plain declarations of Scripture on this ſubject, though we cannot fully account for them; ſaying in the ſpirit of humble adoration, " How unſearchable are thy judgements O Lord!"

Such now is the vindication which I have offered of theſe precious doctrines of the grace of God, from which I hope it will evidently appear, that there is nothing in their character, which, even in the eye of ſober reaſon itſelf, there is any cauſe to be aſhamed of. The pride of human wiſdom may indeed ſometimes ſtagger at the myſterious truth, through unbelief. But candid and inquiring men have always acknowledged that its myſterioufneſs is no ſufficient ground for rejecting it.—Let us hear the judgement of a late celebrated academician upon this point, who was never accuſed of the

weakneſs of an over eaſy belief. " The doc-
" trines of Chriſtianity," ſays he, " have never
" yet been proved to be impoſſible. They are
" only obſcure, and they cannot be otherwiſe.
" If God ſhould reveal to men any of the ſe-
" crets upon which he has formed the plan of
" things, theſe muſt appear to us incomprehen-
" ſible. The degree of clearneſs in any caſe,
" depends on the proportion between the ideas
" of him that ſpeaks, and of him that hears;
" and what immenſe diſproportion is there in
" the caſe before us?—If any of the ſacred wri-
" ters had been ſo inſpired, that, inſtead of
" giving us ſome detached doctrines, he had
" deduced theſe doctrines from their depen-
" dance on, and delivered them in their con-
" nection with, the univerſal plan, there is no
" reaſon to think that we ſhould have been a-
" ble to underſtand him. The principles with
" which he muſt have ſet out would have been
" too much raiſed above us, and the chain of
" propoſitions would have been far too long;
" and beſides, it is not to be doubted, that i-
" deas muſt enter into ſuch a plan, of quite a
" different order from thoſe with which we are

" acquaint-

" acquainted *." And let us liſten to the obſervation of another diſtinguiſhed writer, that " difficulties in ſpeculation are a part of our " trial, juſt in the ſame manner as difficulties in " practice †." To which I may add, that it is one of the glorious triumphs of revealed truth, when it once enters into the heart, that it " caſts down imaginations and every high thing " that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of " God, and bringeth into captivity every " thought to the obedience of Chriſt ‡."

All that now remains is, to deſcribe the holy and bleſſed effects which are produced, by the much injured, but ineſtimable doctrines of the goſpel, wherever they are cordially received. They are " the power of God unto ſal- " vation, to every one that believeth."

It may ſeem ſtrange to ſome, when I aſſert that the doctrines of the goſpel not only moſt effectually ſecure the great intereſts of morality, but that they form a character ſo ſublime and excellent,

* Oeuvres de Maupertius.

† Butler's Analogy.

‡ 2 Cor. x. 5.

excellent, that, while it cannot be produced by any different principles, the general maſs of nominal Chriſtians ſeem ſcarcely able to reach it even in conception. This however is as certain as the exiſtence of real holineſs upon the earth in the midſt of prevailing corruption. There is nothing that is more frequent in the mouths of many, eſpecially of thoſe who are enemies to theſe doctrines, than the morality of the goſpel. Its obligation indeed is univerſally acknowledged, and its excellency praiſed; and yet perhaps there is nothing which in its diſtinguiſhing and ſupereminent qualities is leſs generally underſtood. Men underſtand ſomething of the nature of common juſtice and fidelity in their intercourſe with one another. They know the obligation of a becoming regularity in their own deportment; and they have learned the duties of kindneſs and beneficence from the dictates of humanity itſelf. But do they underſtand aright either the extent or the importance of Chriſtian piety, ſobriety, humility, ſelf-denial, contempt of the world, and heavenly mindedneſs? Do they underſtand the meaning

ing and obligation of "laying down their lives "for the brethren *," and of "loving their ve- "ry enemies †?" Do they know the import of "being crucified to the world," and "hav- "ing the world crucified to them ‡?" Have they learned the meaning of theſe great moral maxims which our Lord delivered: "Bleſſed "are they that mourn; for they ſhall be com- "forted. Bleſſed are ye poor; for ye ſhall be "rich. Bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile "you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all "manner of evil againſt you falſely, for my "ſake: rejoice and be exceeding glad; for "great is your reward in heaven?" On the contrary, do we not ſee them acting in direct oppoſition to theſe principles every day, while they ſeem ſcarcely to imagine that they have done amiſs? The truth is, they either have no conception of thoſe holy and elevated tempers, or if they have, they conſider them as forming only an ideal character, which cannot be real- ized. Happily, however, it has been exem- plified in the lives of genuine Chriſtians in eve- ry

* 1 John iii. 16. † Mat. v. 44.

‡ Gal. vi. 14.

ry age. Let us take a view of it, as it ſhines with luſtre in the conduct and ſpirit of the primitive diſciples.

In what an amiable light are they exhibited in the ſacred volume! They are repreſented as a ſociety " not of the world," and " there-" fore the world hated them *;" becauſe they reverſed all its maxims. The love of God was their ſupreme affection; and the offices of devotion were their moſt delightful exerciſe. They looked " not to the things which are ſeen and " are temporal, but to the things which are " not ſeen, and which are eternal †." They had their " converſation," and their treaſure, and their hearts, all " in heaven," and were " like men that wait for the coming of their " Lord ‡." " They were troubled on every " ſide, but not diſtreſſed; apparently ſorrowful, " yet always rejoicing §." " Nay, they even " gloried in tribulation ‖" itſelf, knowing that it was for " the trial" and triumph " of their

" faith,

* John xv. 19.
† 2 Cor. iv. 18.
‡ Philip. iii. 20.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 8. & vi. 10.
‖ Rom. v. 3.

" faith, that it might be found unto praiſe, and " honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus " Chriſt *." They were humble, ſelf-diffident, and ſelf-denied; placing all their dependance upon the grace that is in Chriſt. " They walk- " ed" continually " in the fear of the Lord, " and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt †." Their ſouls were filled with admiration of redeeming love; and their mouths with the high praiſes of God. And the whole " multitude of " them that believed, were of one heart, and " of one ſoul ‡;"—" they loved as brethren §;" and were benevolent and friendly to all. What an admirable picture is here exhibited to our view! What a total renovation of the human character! What elevation of ſentiment and ſpirit! What fervent piety! What warmth of affection! What purity and rectitude of diſpoſition! And what ſuperiority to all worldly conſiderations, by which mankind every where are almoſt univerſally ſwayed!

Such is the character which the goſpel forms. It

* 1 Pet. i. 7.
† Acts ix. 31.
‡ Acts iv. 32.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 8.

It is produced by its peculiar doctrines. And, deſpiſed as they commonly are, were it not for them, no ſuch character could ever be formed.—Let us examine this matter a little, in which the credit of Chriſtianity is ſo deeply concerned.

It will readily be granted, that the more powerful the diſcovery of the evil and danger of ſin, the better is it fitted to deter men from every appearance of it, and to make them ſeek and ſtrive to the utmoſt to be preſerved and delivered from it. But how is this moſt powerful diſcovery to be obtained? Whether is it by ſuppoſing *Him* who can beſt judge of its deformity and demerit to pardon the ſinner without any expiation of his guilt; or by beholding him exacting complete ſatisfaction for it, even when his own Son was the ſufferer? What is it that can impreſs us with the moſt alarming ſenſe of the malignity and inveteracy of this ruinous diſeaſe? Is it the doctrine which teaches us that we can remedy it by our own endeavours, or that which informs us that nothing but the power of Almighty grace can overcome and deſtroy it? And if theſe awful diſcoveries

are

are neceſſary, in the judgement of unerring wiſdom, for awakening and convincing ſinners, and perſuading them to liſten to the goſpel call; is it likely that this will be accompliſhed by any leſs affecting repreſentations?

But the doctrines of the goſpel, when they are ſet home upon the conſcience, are not only diſſuaſive of ſin in the higheſt poſſible degree; but they bind the ſoul to holineſs by the moſt animating conſiderations, and are fitted to produce an obedience, of a far more generous and elevated kind, than what can ever reſult from any of thoſe ſpurious ſchemes by which Chriſtianity has been ſo often diſgraced. No principle can more effectually warm and enliven the heart than a ſenſe of the obligation, which the Chriſtian owes to God's pardoning mercy. But how is this obligation moſt deeply felt? Is it by receiving the communication of that mercy as due to our repentance? or rather, is it not evidently, by beholding the very pardon which we have obtained, and which we had in us nothing to merit, written, as I may ſpeak, even with the blood of the Son of God, ſhed to procure it for us? In this way alone, we are penetrated

netrated with a ſenſe of the ineſtimable benefit, and are made to feel that we are infinitely indebted to that rich and ſovereign mercy which has beſtowed it. Upon this principle, likewiſe, what an irreſiſtible force do we perceive in the affecting argument, that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore ſhould glorify God in our bodies and ſpirits which are his! And how conſtraining the influence of the love of Chriſt in making us "to live not to "ourſelves, but to him who died for us, and "roſe again!"

Theſe moving conſiderations, likewiſe, do not diminiſh but increaſe the force of the other arguments and motives to holineſs, and againſt ſin, which are commonly uſed. The Chriſtian perceives as ſtrongly as others, that ſin is the ruin and miſery of the ſoul, that it is a deadly poiſon, and that it makes men at laſt like veſſels of wrath, fitted for deſtruction. The beauty of holineſs, to ſay the leaſt, appears as bright and ſplendid in his eyes as in thoſe of others, and its neceſſity as indiſpenſible. And can he be ſuppoſed to feel the leſs, either the evil of the one, or the importance and excellency of the

the other, becauſe he believes that " Chriſt " gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us " from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a " peculiar people, zealous of good works*." It is too evident to be inſiſted on, that this aſtoniſhing truth muſt heighten all theſe intereſting ſentiments, and add greatly to the impreſſion which they would otherwiſe make.

" Do we then make void the law through " faith? God forbid: yea, we eſtabliſh the " law." The obligations to holineſs upon this ſcheme are not only fully maintained, but they are brought down upon the conſcience, with ſuch a weight of evidence, and ſuch an energy of perſuaſive argument, as, were it not for the experience of the malignity of the human heart, one would be tempted to pronounce to be almoſt quite irreſiſtible. Let me aſk now, where do we meet with the beſt friends to the intereſts of genuine holineſs? Is it among thoſe who employ only a part of the motives which Chriſtianity propoſes in its ſupport; or among thoſe who urge and inculcate the whole? To whom are

* Tit. ii. 14.

are mankind moſt indebted as the inſtruments of maintaining its vaſt concerns? Is it to thoſe who enliven every other conſideration in its behalf, by the moving arguments which evangelical truth ſupplies; or to thoſe who deny the very doctrines in which alone they are to be found? I leave it with every candid perſon to anſwer theſe queſtions calmly and ſeriouſly for himſelf.

But to make ample proviſion for the ſanctification of a ſinner, is not the ſole excellency of the goſpel. It likewiſe builds his ſecurity and hope upon the ſureſt grounds. It is the very genius of Chriſtianity to communicate peace and joy to all who have imbibed its ſpirit. There God has prepared "ſtrong conſolation "for thoſe who have fled for refuge, to lay hold "upon the hope ſet before them*." Of this the early Chriſtians afford a demonſtrative and a delightful proof. It is impoſſible to read their hiſtory in the New Teſtament, without perceiving that they were under the prevailing influence of this elevated temper. "They joy-

"ed

* Heb. vi. 18.

" ed in God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt * ;"
" whom having not ſeen they loved, and in
" whom though they ſaw him not, yet believ-
" ing, they rejoiced with joy unſpeakable, and
" full of glory †." What an animation and ardour did this give to their obedience! Their dutiful ſervice ſtands eminently diſtinguiſhed from every thing of the kind, where this elevated frame is wanting. " They ſerved God
" in newneſs of ſpirit, and not in the oldneſs of
" the letter ‡." But how is this heavenly joy to be inſpired? Is it by the aſſured perſuaſion, that, believing in Chriſt, we ſhall never periſh; and that, being juſtified freely through the redemption that is in him, we ſhall moſt certainly be glorified alſo? Or is it by being told that we may enjoy all the privileges and benefits of the divine favour to-day, and to-morrow be totally deprived of them? Upon this laſt principle, it is abſolutely impoſſible that the ſoul could ariſe to any thing like holy confidence and triumph, or that we could ever join in that bold

* Rom. v. 11.
† 1 Pet. i. 8.
‡ Rom. vii. 6.

bold unanſwerable challenge, " Who ſhall ſe-
" parate us from the love of Chriſt?" or, in what is afterwards aſſerted, " For I am perſuad-
" ed that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
" nor principalities, nor powers, nor things pre-
" ſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor
" depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able
" to ſeparate us from the love of God which is
" in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord *." Here, then, we evidently ſee, that theſe precious doctrines of the goſpel, produce a more refined and animated obedience than any other principles can poſſibly do; and I cannot help obſerving, by the way, that the firmeſt concluſion might be drawn from this circumſtance, that theſe were the very doctrines which the firſt Chriſtians believed, becauſe they are the only doctrines that could inſpire their ſublime and generous ſpirit.

One other remark ſhall finiſh the evidence on this important ſubject. It has been the complaint of moraliſts, both in former and latter times, that the qualities which are neceſſary to conſtitute a perfect character, are ſo oppoſite in

 their

* Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

their tendencies, that they can ſcarcely be made to operate together in any great degree: —That thoſe, for inſtance, who are formed to ſoftneſs and gentleneſs of diſpoſition, are ſeldom capable of any great and noble actions; and that thoſe, on the other hand, who are of an aſpiring temper, are for the moſt part of a troubleſome and reſtleſs ſpirit, and ſtrangers to that peace in which the comfort of ſociety ſo much conſiſts. And hence it has gone into a maxim, which is, alas! too well juſtified in experience, That great virtues are nearly allied to great vices. This is an evil which muſt ever be irremediable upon the principles of human wiſdom. But "thoſe things which are impoſſible with "men, are poſſible with God." By the doctrines of the goſpel, theſe apparent contrarieties are reconciled; and the character which is formed upon them has often exhibited the gentleneſs of the Lamb united to the boldneſs of the lion, and the humility of a child combined with the dignity of an angel.

We are now, I hope, prepared to explain this curious fact. We have ſeen already, how much theſe doctrines are calculated to awaken every

every tender ſenſibility in our frame, and at the ſame time to carry us on, by the ſtrongeſt impulſe, to whatever is excellent and great. And when we reflect, that the wonderful plan of redemption which they unfold, is entirely of unmerited and ſovereign grace, that we owe every holy diſpoſition to ſupernatural influence, and are accepted in every ſervice only through the merits of the Saviour; ſelf-eſtimation falls proſtrate before theſe humbling truths, and a ſenſe of unworthineſs and obligation pervades the heart. "Where is boaſting then? It is ex-"cluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: "but by the law of faith."—A high degree of improvement in every amiable and excellent quality, untarniſhed by vanity, and untainted with pride, is juſtly held to be a moſt finiſhed character in the eye of the world itſelf. And it is the glory of the goſpel, that, by its doctrines alone, this character can be produced.

What accumulated evidence have we now before us, that the doctrines we have been contemplating are divine, and that they contain the plan, the only plan of infinite wiſdom, for delivering ſinners from deſtruction, and making them

them a holy people to the Lord? This wonderful plan ſhall be fully accompliſhed. The providence of God knows how to advance its progreſs; and there is no " underſtanding, or " counſel, or might," that can prevail againſt it.

Melancholy thoughts indeed are apt to ruſh into our minds, when we ſurvey the preſent external appearance of the Chriſtian churches. Alas! How are they fallen from their former purity and zeal! There we behold religion languiſhing, infidelity lifting up her head, and licentiouſneſs unaſhamed leading her votaries along. And what is the reaſon? It is becauſe they have moſtly departed from thoſe great and cardinal doctrines which were once their glory; and therefore we need not be ſurpriſed at this ſad reverſe.

It is likewiſe a diſcouraging reflection, that, during the long period of almoſt eighteen hundred years ſince its firſt publication, Chriſtianity has only had a partial and circumſcribed extent; not to ſpeak of its having been reduced, for a conſiderable part of that period, to ſo low a ſtate that it was ſcarcely viſible. This has always been conſidered as a very gravelling fact;

and it is impoſſible to account for it, without admitting the ſame ſovereignty of the divine counſels, in the propagation of the goſpel, by which the plan itſelf is ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed. But when we look forward to its future triumphs, through the medium of prophetic viſion, our faith is ſtrengthened, and our ſpirits are exhilerated with the glorious proſpect. We ſee the time approaching, and probably now at no great diſtance, when it ſhall make the moſt rapid progreſs, and every oppoſition ſhall be beat down before it, till it extend its ſalutary influence over all the earth. Then " the mountain of the Lord's houſe ſhall be eſ- " tabliſhed in the top of the mountains, and all " nations ſhall flow unto it *." Then " the " kingdoms of this world ſhall become the " kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt †." Then " the lofty looks of man ſhall be hum- " bled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be " bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be " exalted ‡." And then " all the ends of the " earth

* Iſa. ii. 2. † Rev. xi. 15.

‡ Iſa, ii. 11.

" earth ſhall turn to him *," " and all nations " ſhall ſerve him †." There is ſcarcely any thing that ſeems more to have elevated the conceptions of the antient prophets than this glorious period, though they beheld it only in diſtant proſpect. They employed and even exhauſted their boldeſt imagery in deſcribing it. I forbear at preſent collecting the many admirable paſſages on this point, with which their writings abound. Let me only obſerve, that the diſcoveries they have made afford the ſtrongeſt encouragement to Chriſtians, to exert their utmoſt endeavours for the propagation and ſucceſs of the goſpel, from the perſuaſion that their labour ſhall not be in vain.

In promoting this benevolent deſign, the ſuggeſtions of human ingenuity muſt be excluded; the means which unerring wiſdom has appointed muſt be adopted; the word of ſalvation muſt be clearly and faithfully declared; and, like the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, thoſe to whom it is committed, muſt " by manifeſta-" tion of the truth, commend themſelves to " every

* Pſal. xxii. 27. † Pſal. lxxii. 11.

" every man's conſcience as in the ſight of " God." The ſame doctrines by which the converſion of the world was begun, muſt finally accompliſh it; and it will be found, in the iſſue, that in vain ſhall men attempt it upon any different plan. But, let it not be forgotten, that after all that can be done in this important work, the whole is in the hand of God, and therefore ſucceſs is to be expected only from his favour and bleſſing.

It is a joyful and animating thought, that God, in his providence, has been pleaſed from time to time, to raiſe up men, whoſe hearts have been filled with the moſt ardent concern for the ſalvation of their fellow mortals, ready to periſh for want of ſpiritual inſtruction, and who have concerted ſchemes for ſending the goſpel among them. Of this, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, is a ſignal example. They have laboured for many years in this generous undertaking; and bleſſed be God, they have no reaſon to be diſcouraged. Providence has ſmiled upon their inſtitution in various ways; and particularly in ſupplying the means of carrying it more fully into

into effect. Let them go on with renewed ardour in profecuting their great defign. They have the good wifhes and prayers of all the faints to favour them; and they who pafs by and obferve the fuccefs of their labours, as well as thofe who experience it, will fay, " The blef-" fing of the Lord be upon you: We blefs you " in the name of the Lord."

One thing I may be permitted to obferve: It has been the anxious wifh of many ferious and liberal-minded Chriftians, that fchemes might be formed for fending the knowledge of the gofpel to diftant lands, in different quarters of the world. They are aware of the difficulties which attend the propofal; they are convinced, however, it is not impracticable; and to the zeal and ability of this Society, they naturally look up with expectation. In the mean time, the perfeverance of the Society in their labours among the Indian tribes of America, deferves much commendation. Let them not be difcouraged by the obftructions they may meet with, or by the little fuccefs of their exertions. This work of the Lord ought not eafily to be relinquifhed. Though appearances

fometimes

ſometimes may wear an unpromiſing aſpect, yet, I may apply to them the ſaying of a great man upon a different occaſion *: "That they "are ſowing ſeed which may be fruitful in ano-"ther age."

I conclude with recommending, in the moſt earneſt manner, the bleſſed doctrines of redemption to all who hear me. Believe it, my friends, they are the only doctrines upon which you can build your hopes for eternity, either with comfort or with ſafety. "For other foundation "can no man lay, than that is laid, which is "Jeſus Chriſt." Think then what inexpreſſible injury is done to the ſouls of men, by either with-holding theſe doctrines, or ſubſtituting ſchemes of human invention in their room: and let it be your daily endeavour to maintain their credit. Live continually under their prevailing influence: and manifeſt in your whole deportment that amiable and heavenly temper which they inſpire. This will be inſtead of a thouſand arguments in their behalf. And thus,

* Father Paul of Venice.

while you advance your own ſpiritual improvement and peace, you ſhall be the honoured inſtruments in the hand of God, of tranſmitting Chriſtianity in its purity and in its power to the ſucceeding generation; that the people who are yet unborn, may praiſe the Lord.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

SOCIETY HALL, 3d Dec. 1794.

IT was mentioned in the laſt Appendix, that in making up the ſcheme of expenditure for the year commencing on the firſt of May 1793, the Directors had proceeded upon the expectation of the ſpeedy payment of Lord Van-Vryhouven's magnificent legacy; and, that the public might the ſooner derive the benefit of it, they had ſubjected themſelves to the temporary inconveniences of an anticipation of revenue. They were fully ſenſible, that the delay of payment was owing to no other cauſe than the tedioufneſs of forms in the Court of Chancery, neceſſary to be gone through before the executors could be authoriſed to pay the ſeveral ſums bequeathed.

The Directors have now the ſatisfaction to inform the public, that theſe obſtacles have been removed;—that the executors have in the moſt honourable and punctual manner

manner fulfilled the injunctions of the will, by inveſting the whole ſum of L. 20,000, in the 3 per cent. annuities, in the name of the Society, and paying up the intereſt due upon it to the very day of its inveſtiture.

The Directors have alſo the pleaſure to acknowledge a legacy of one thouſand pounds, of which they were informed only a few weeks ago, bequeathed to them by the will of John Holmes, Eſq. of Ide, in the county of Devon; a member, and formerly a benefactor of the Society, but payable only upon the death of Mrs. Holmes his widow.

The late William Davidſon, of Muirhouſe, Eſq. formerly alſo a member and benefactor of the Society, has bequeathed to them by his will, one hundred pounds.

Some other ſmaller bequeſts and donations have been received ſince the publication of the laſt appendix.

While the Directors, and Members of the Society at large, are thankful to Providence, for thus raiſing up to them from time to time munificent friends, generouſly contributing to the increaſe of their funds; they feel themſelves called upon, in conſequence, to new exertions of diligence and attention to the application of them to the objects of the Inſtitution. They beg leave, therefore, to aſſure the public that they ſteadily perſevere in the execution of that plan, which has been repeatedly announced, and has received the moſt unequivocal teſtimonies of public approbation.

It is not without concern, that the Directors have heard

heard of inſinuations being ſometimes thrown out, that the Society have become ſo wealthy as to be at a loſs for proper objects upon which to beſtow their increaſed revenue.

If ſuch ideas are *ſeriouſly* entertained by any, the Directors have only to requeſt their attention to a ſhort abſtract of their expenditure annexed to this appendix, and to a few facts immediately connected with it, which they now beg leave to ſet before them.

From this abſtract it appears, that they have erected and endued, no leſs than *three hundred and twenty-three* ſchools for religion, the firſt principles of literature, and induſtry, at the annual expence of *three thouſand, two hundred and fourteen pounds, ten ſhillings ſterling*; ſixteen of which are new eſtabliſhments within the current year. At theſe ſeminaries are educated, from fourteen to fifteen thouſand children; who, but for the means of inſtruction thus afforded to them, would, in all probability be bred up in ignorance and idleneſs.

That they employ *twelve* miſſionary miniſters and catechiſts in remote parts of the Highlands and Iſlands, or among the ignorant Highlanders ſettled in the great towns of Scotland, at the annual expence of *two hundred and ninety-ſix pounds*.

That they beſtow a burſary or penſion of fifteen pounds per annum, on *each of ſix Students of Divinity* having the Gaelic language: hence, *ninety pounds per annum*.

That they employ *two* miſſionary miniſters, and one

ſchoolmaſter

ſchoolmaſter among the Oneida and Stockbridge Indians of North America, (being the deſtination of certain legacies bequeathed to them), at the annual expence of *one hundred and forty pounds.*

Such is their fixed ſcheme of expenditure for the current year, amounting in all to *three thouſand, ſeven hundred and forty pounds, ten ſhillings ſterling,*—a ſum it will be acknowledged of very conſiderable magnitude.

But beſides this, they have ſubjected themſelves to a variety of other neceſſary though incidental expences.

They are carrying on the tranſlation and printing of the laſt volume of the Old Teſtament Scriptures in Gaelic, beſides a new edition of 20,000 copies of the Gaelic New Teſtament, under the ſuperintendence and reviſion of the Reverend John Stuart, Miniſter of Luſs, (the tranſlator of two volumes of the Old Teſtament,) whoſe labours in that line have been of much benefit to the public, and done great credit to himſelf in the eſtimation of all competent judges. Their account of paper alone for this work, amounts to *one hundred and ſeventy-eight pounds for the current year.*

They have to pay of annuities, in conſequence of ſums left to them as reſiduary legatees, *one hundred and eighty nine pounds.*

Of land and houſe taxes, *one hundred and eight pounds.*

They defray the expence of *many* of the candidates who come to Edinburgh for examination with proper certificates of their character, and often of their reſidence there,

there, weeks together, for their improvement before they are ſuſtained, and enrolled in their books, as qualified for being employed as ſchoolmaſters in their ſervice.

When they remove ſchoolmaſters from one ſtation to another, (and ſometimes they are at conſiderable diſtances), they always make them an allowance for the expence. And the laſt mentioned, though not the leaſt expenſive article of this claſs, they furniſh the ſchools on their eſtabliſhment, eſpecially thoſe in remote places, where they are not otherwiſe to be had, and where beſides the people are too poor, or too ignorant of their value, to purchaſe them, with the books abſolutely neceſſary for carrying on the education of youth; ſpelling books, catechiſms, New Teſtaments, and Bibles, both Engliſh and Gaelic.—It is to be added, that at preſent the books printed for the uſe of the Society's ſchools are nearly exhauſted.—To furniſh the neceſſary ſupply, will ſubject the Society to a heavy expence next year.

Theſe three laſt articles, cannot be eſtimated on an average, at leſs than four hundred pounds per annum.

Such are the great objects to which the funds of the Society are devoted, and ſuch as nearly as it can be eſtimated, the amount of the ſums laid out in promoting them.

The fixed expenditure, as appears by the abſtract of the ſcheme hereto ſubjoined, is L. 3740: 10s. The whole of the incidental expences ariſing from the different

rent articles above ſpecified, is, for this year L. 875. amounting in all to L. 4,615 : 10s.

If it be enquired at what expence in the management of it this extenſive and complicated charity is annually conducted, the Directors chearfully ſtate this alſo to the public, and with the ſame candour as they have done the other articles. The treaſurer, bookholder, and clerk, are allowed each, twenty-five pounds per annum, the ſame ſalaries which were annexed to theſe offices from the commencement of the Society. The beadle, or officer, is allowed twelve pounds per annum. No ſalary whatever, is enjoyed by any of the other officers of the Society. The Secretary, Comptroller, Accountant, and Librarian, although ſubjected, ſome of them eſpecially, to no ſmall expence of time and labour, have no pecuniary recompence or emolument. Theirs are labours of love, for which they ſeek and expect no other reward than the conſciouſneſs of endeavouring to promote the beſt intereſts of mankind.

It may alſo be proper to obſerve, that no advantage whatever ariſes to any perſon connected with the Society, from the uſe of the Society's money; as immediately upon its being received, it is depoſited at intereſt in the Royal Bank of Scotland, and drawn for as occaſions require. On theſe terms the gentleman who now acts as Treaſurer, (and whoſe character is too well known to the public, to ſtand in need of an eulogium in this place,)

place,) accepted of the office, and continues to fulfil its various and troubleſome duties.

And here the Directors think themſelves called upon to pay a juſt tribute of acknowledgement to the Directors of the Royal Bank, for the handſome and liberal terms on which they agreed to tranſact buſineſs with the Society.

The whole amount of the expence of managing the buſineſs of the Society, including the above ſalaries, and coals, candles, Stationary ware, poſtages, and other incidents, exceeds not at an average, *one hundred and fifteen pounds per annum.*

The directors, conſcious of the purity and diſintereſtedneſs with which the affairs of the Society are conducted, willingly ſubmit theſe facts to public view; they invite, and would be happy in a narrow inveſtigation into their truth.

One article has not yet been noticed, becauſe it is an occaſional one, and which it is to be hoped will not again occur for ages to come, and that is, the expence of the houſe and offices lately purchaſed, and fitted up for a place of meeting, and for conducting the buſineſs of the Society. The great need under which they long laboured for theſe accommodations is well known to the public. Their tranſactions for obtaining them, were recited in the laſt appendix. The work though unaccountably delayed by the Contractor, is now almoſt ready for the purpoſes for which it was intended; *nor is*

it propoſed that any private advantage ſhall ariſe from it to any individual.

From the ſtatement given above, it appears, that hitherto at leaſt, the Directors have been at no loſs for important objects, within the proper ſphere of their inſtitution, on which to beſtow their increaſed funds.

But from the number of ſchools upon their eſtabliſhment, it may be imagined, that the Highlands and Iſlands are now ſufficiently provided, and that new erections would be ſuperfluous. This opinion can be entertained by none but thoſe who are utterly unacquainted with the ſtate of theſe countries, eſpecially their more remote, and hitherto almoſt totally neglected diſtricts. The Directors are unwilling to repeat what has been ſtated with great truth in former appendixes, upon this ſubject, particularly in thoſe of 1791 and 1792. They beg leave only to ſuggeſt in ſo many words, that if notwithſtanding of all the ſchools eſtabliſhed by the Society, there are ſtill diſtricts in which one parochial ſchool is all that is afforded to ſeveral contiguous pariſhes; if there are many pariſhes of vaſt extent and populouſneſs interſected by mountains, rapid rivers, and arms of the ſea, each of which enjoys but one ſchool, and from which the children in the greateſt part of the pariſh are as effectually excluded as if there were none; and if there are pariſhes in the Highlands and Iſlands, committed to the charge of *one* clergyman, which, reſembling rather extenſive provinces, would require the

labours

labours of many; then it will follow, that the erection of more ſchools, and the eſtabliſhment of more miniſters, are objects moſt paſſionately to be wiſhed for by every friend to religion and humanity. Certain it is, and for the truth of the aſſertion, the Directors appeal with confidence to every man who is acquainted with the ſtate of theſe countries, that in many parts of them there are ſtill thouſands utterly deprived of the means of education to their children, and of religious inſtruction, and the ordinances of the goſpel to themſelves.

The Directors of the Society have, it is true, the diſpoſal of very conſiderable ſums for promoting the objects of the Inſtitution; and, for the ſatisfaction of the public, they have ſtated the manner in which they are applied; but they are ſo far from accumulating wealth, that every year, their expenditure, notwithſtanding the late increaſe of their capital, exceeds, rather than falls ſhort of their income. They have depended upon a kind Providence and a generous public, to refund theſe anticipations of their revenue, and hitherto they have never been diſappointed. They conſider themſelves merely as channels for conveying to the public, what is given to them for public benefit, in promoting the ends of the Inſtitution; their duty is to take care that it be faithfully and uſefully applied. They give their labour and pains; and, ſecure of the approbation of their own minds, and hoping to maintain that confidence with the public, of which they have had ſo many flattering proofs, they expect no other reward.

Many

Many more applications for ſchools and miſſionary miniſters, in the remote parts of the Highlands and Iſlands, have lately been made to them, than it is in their power, in a conſiſtency with common prudence, to grant. They are fully ſenſible of the importance, and urgent neceſſity of many of them;---they regret their inability to comply with the earneſt ſolicitations of thoſe who have applied for them;---and though they feel the burden of managing ſo extenſive a ſcheme, as that of the Society has now become, yet, they ſhall be happy to undergo the additional labour of enlarging it ſtill farther, if the increaſe of their funds ſhall enable them to do ſo.

But, if this ſhall not prove the caſe, they will find themſelves under the neceſſity of ſuppreſſing ſome of their ſchools in thoſe ſtations which are neareſt the Low Country, and which have longeſt enjoyed them, in order to ſend teachers to the dark and hitherto neglected diſtricts of the remote Highlands and Iſlands, where the light of the Goſpel has as yet ſcarcely dawned; and, where the firſt principles of literature, and well-directed induſtry, are totally unknown to the great body of the inhabitants.

To the Correſponding Board in London, and their Secretary, for their continued laudable exertions in promoting the intereſt of the Inſtitution, the Directors beg leave to offer their beſt acknowledgements.

It has been ſuggeſted to the Parent Board, that ſome Miniſters of the Church of England ſhould be occaſionally invited to preach the anniverſary ſermon of the Society in London. The propoſal, with the entire and unanimous approbation of the Members, has been agreed to. It will afford to the Directors, and they are perſuaded, to all the real friends of the Society in Scotland, the moſt lively pleaſure, to find this charitable Inſtitution countenanced and ſupported by pious and worthy Clergymen of the neighbouring church. The *Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, have for their objects, not the partial views of any particular ſect or denomination of Chriſtians, but the great and general intereſts of religion, humanity, and their country;* gladly therefore and thankfully will they receive the co-operation and aid of every friend to theſe important objects.

The Directors beg leave to return their beſt thanks to their noble Preſident the Earl of Kinnoull—To the gentlemen who officiated as ſtewards; and to the numerous and reſpectable company who attended at the laſt anniverſary meeting of the Society in London.—They requeſt alſo that their acknowledments may be acceptable to thoſe gentlemen who have kindly undertaken to act as ſtewards at the next anniverſary, and they take this opportunity of intimating to thoſe from whom they have been accuſtomed to receive benefactions upon theſe occaſions that their money is not added to the ſtock, but *immediately* laid out in promoting the

objects of the Inſtitution. This the Directors underſtand to be the will of the Donors, and this to them is in all caſes a rule of conduct. In the preſent inſtance, ſo much is this the eſtabliſhed practice, that the Directors and officers of the Society, in annually making up the fixed ſcheme of expenditure for the enſuing year commencing on the firſt of May, which is always done in the month of February, uniformly reckon upon the average ſum which may be expected from the contributors at the anniverſary meeting in London.——Gentlemen who contribute upon theſe occaſions, therefore, may take all the comfort which can ariſe to benevolent minds, from the aſſurance that their money is immediately employed in carrying religion, literature, and induſtry, into the cottages of multitudes of their countrymen, hitherto the habitations of deplorable ignorance, idleneſs, and poverty.

GENERAL

GENERAL ABSTRACT of the SOCIETY'S ESTABLISHMENTS for the Year, from 1st May 1794, to 1st May 1795.

Number of Eſtabliſhments.				*Number of Scholars.*	*Amount of Salaries.*
In SCOTLAND	First Patent	Schools -	229	12,010	L. 274 9 10
		Miſſionaries and Catechiſts	12		295
		Burſaries -	6		90
	Second Patent	Schools -	94	2360	465
In AMERICA	First Patent	Miſſionaries -	2		100
		Schoolmaſter for the Indians	1		40
		Totals	344	14,370	374 0 10

THE PRESIDENT, DIRECTORS, AND OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1795.

DAVID EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILL,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

Committee of Directors.

ROBERT EARL OF KINNOULL, Preſident.

Sir William Forbes of Pitſligo, Bart. Banker in Edinburgh.

Rev. Walter Buchannan, one of the Miniſters of Canongate.

Mr Alexander Pitcairn, Merchant in Edinburgh.

Rev. Thomas Davidſon, D. D. one of the Miniſters of Edinburgh.

Andrew Hamilton, Eſq. Deputy Comptroller of Exciſe.

Sir John Wiſhart Belſches of Fettercairn, Bart. Advocate.

Rev. William Paul, one of the Miniſters of St. Cuthberts.

Adam Rolland of Gaſk, Eſq. Advocate.

David Reid Eſq. one of the Commiſſioners of the Cuſtoms.

John Dickſon Eſq. of Coulter, Advocate.

Rev. David Johnſton, D. D. Miniſter of North Leith.

William M'Donald, Eſq. of St. Martins, Clerk to the Signet.

Rev. Andrew Hunter, D. D. S. T. P. one of the Miniſters of Edinburgh.

Mr

Mr James Bonar, Deputy Solicitor of Excise.

Officers of the Society.

Rev. John Kemp, D. D. one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, Secretary.

Alexander Duncan, Esq. Clerk to the Signet, Treasurer.

William Galloway, Esq. Merchant in Edinburgh, Comptroller.

Horatius Cannan, Esq. Clerk to the Signet, Accountant.

Mr Archibald Lundie, Clerk to the Signet, Book-holder.

Mr James Robertson, Writer in Edinburgh, Clerk.

Mr John Pitcairn, Merchant in Edinburgh, Librarian.

Mungo Watson, Officer.

Annual and other Benefactions are received by

The Secretary, Treasurer, or any of the principal officers of the Society in Edinburgh.

In London,

By Thomas Coutts, Esq. Banker in the Strand.

William Fuller, Esq. and Son, Bankers, Lombard-Street.

Henry Hunter, D. D. Charles' Square, Hoxton, Secretary to the Corresponding Board in London.

Form of a Bequeſt or Legacy.

Item, I give and bequeath the ſum of to the *Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge*, to be applied, either to the general objects of the inſtitution, or to ſuch particular purpoſes, conſiſtent with theſe objects, as the donor may think proper.

N. B. Thoſe who may be pleaſed to favour this Society with Bequeſts or Legacies, are intreated to expreſs their intention in the very words above directed; and particularly to take care that the words, *in Scotland*, be not omitted.

E R R A T A.

Page 10. line 11. *from the foot, for* reſearches *read* reſearch.
P. 11. l. 4. *for* were *read* are.
P. 16. l. 8. *from the foot, for* the leading doctrines *read* the other leading doctrines.
P. 16. l. 2. *for* philoſophical *r.* philoſophic.
P. 18. l. 3. *for* could *r.* would.
P. 21. l. 2. from foot, *for* has *r.* have
P. 31. l. 7, *for* grounds *r.* ground.
P. 35. note l. 4. *dele* ever. l. 5. from foot, *for* mark *r.* marks.
Ib. l. 8. from note, *dele* ſtrong.
P. 36. note, l. 3. from the foot, *for* that hitherto *r.* that has hitherto.